

**After the Revolution: Terror, Literature, and the Nation in Modern France.**

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## **After the Revolution: Terror, Literature, and the Nation in Modern France.**

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This dissertation provides a framework in which to consider how collective memory, national identity, and literature insist on a political vision of the nation. The works in question are examples of the enduring impact of pivotal events on the French literary tradition. This study takes a diachronic approach to studying literature written during moments of crisis in France. It examines works dealing with the Revolutionary Terror (1793-1794), the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), and World War II's *drôle de guerre* (1940).

The writers chosen for this dissertation all use the rhetoric of literature as a way to think through the crisis and imagine ways to respond to it. In particular, this study explores how fear, power, and indoctrination are used to represent ideals of French national identity and the chaos surrounding earth-shattering events. Theories of historical representation, nationalism, and event fidelity provide the framework to reveal underlying political perspectives in the works studied.

The chapters of this dissertation are organized chronologically, beginning with the Terror. Within the first chapter, the focus is on the Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, particularly its fabricated political pamphlet, "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains." Sade's work is juxtaposed with that of a virtually unknown émigré writer, Louis de Bruno's *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique*. The next event studied is the Franco-Prussian War, and the resulting Paris Commune. Victor Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize* and Jules Vern's *Le Chemin de France* are both set during the Revolutionary War, but address

events taking place in nineteenth-century France. The last chapter deals with the initial period of defeat and occupation in World War II. Both Jean-Paul Sartre's Nativity play, *Bariona ou le fils du tonnerre* and Marc Bloch's wartime testimonial *L'Étrange défaite* encourage Frenchmen to continue the fight against foreign aggressors.

The authors in question attempted to give the nation cultural roots, or shared *lieux de mémoire*, in the aftermath of traumatic events. This study shows how writers use texts to mediate chronological and ideological distance between events and to recreate what no longer exists, in hopes of defining a new way forward for the nation.

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## **PREFACE**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“It is literature primarily that has consistently maintained  
an equivocal relationship with the lived.”  
– Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

Since the medieval *Chanson de Roland*, the idea of nationhood in France has been linked to a large degree with literary texts and their representations of contemporary society. France has relied on its intellectuals and its *écrivains engagés* to lead the battle to define or redefine French identity. Major historical events and their implications appear as recurrent literary motifs throughout the history of French literature. This study focuses on representations of three major crises in French history, namely the French Revolution, the Franco-Prussian War, and World War II's *drôle de guerre*. Such a diachronic approach is necessary to my argument concerning the enduring impact of pivotal events on the French literary tradition. My dissertation examines the relationship between collective memory, national history, and literature. In particular, I explore how fear, power, and indoctrination are used in literary texts to respond to the chaos surrounding earth-shattering events and to shape French national identity at moments of crisis.

This dissertation treats three historical crises that profoundly impacted French nationalism: the Revolutionary Terror (1793-1794), the Franco-Prussian War and Commune (1870-1871), and the initial period of occupation in World War II (1940). These specific moments were critical to defining the modern nation and all deal with questions of national

identity during both internal and external crises. Beginning with the Revolution, there is a sense of conscious creation in regards to the modern nation, including the use of public education, standardized language, and a more homogenous military. Literature was also one of the guiding forces during these times, due in part to ever-increasing access to printed materials. As literacy increased among the general public, so too did the importance of literature as a tool for shaping and influencing national identity.

According to such diverse scholars as Karl Marx, Lucien Febvre, and Rogers Brubaker, the French Revolution represents the beginning of the modern nation-state. While widely accepted as an ideological break from previous nationalist régimes, the Revolution is also seen by many scholars as an event inseparable from the subsequent Reign of Terror. Among those who believe the Terror was integral to the ultimate success of the Revolution are David Andress, François Furet, and Mona Ozouf. The word Terror comes from the Latin *terrere*, which means to frighten or terrify.<sup>1</sup> Found in the French language since the early seventeenth century, the term has evolved from a simple expression of fear to the historical Reign of Terror, always designated in French with the article *la*, and typically capitalized: “la Terreur, se dit absolument de l’époque de la Révolution française pendant laquelle le tribunal révolutionnaire et l’échafaud furent en permanence.”<sup>2</sup> The modern use of the term is now almost exclusively associated with the words terrorism and terrorists, both of which also came from the Revolution, but are now linked to global ideologically-driven violence. The two Revolutionary era works discussed in this dissertation were both written as a direct response to the Terror, albeit from drastically different ideological standpoints. The Marquis de Sade’s *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) was written shortly after the fall of Robespierre and his fellow Terrorists, while Louis de Bruno

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<sup>1</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1982 ed., s.v. “terrere.”

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 1956-1958 ed., s.v. “terreur.”

took advantage of *émigré* statutes a few years later to publish his *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique* (1800).

The next episode chosen for this study is the Franco-Prussian War and Paris Commune (1870-1871). The dramatic events of 1870-1871 revive representations of the Terror in French letters, as an original moment of crisis. These two years saw the collapse of the Second Empire, due to military defeat and foreign invasion. The Commune's attempt to assume leadership of the country resulted in one of the nineteenth century's bloodiest civil wars. The novels considered in this study were written well after these events, but both were set during the internal and external wars of the Revolution. *Quatrevingt-Treize* (1874) by Victor Hugo and *Le Chemin de France* (1887) by Jules Verne depict the years of the Terror, but the timeframe is used primarily as a convenient historical setting in which the authors convey a message about nineteenth-century France. Both novels focus almost exclusively on wartime adventures, the Vendean Civil War and the Prussian warfront, respectively, rather than addressing the Terror itself. This is the first example within this study of how an original event is taken modified in later literature. Both novelists were firm Republicans, and presented Republican France as a long-cherished ideal.

The last timeframe studied in this dissertation is the *drôle de guerre* (1940) of World War II and its traumatic conclusion, the Nazi invasion of France. Like the other two historical moments discussed, the *drôle de guerre* was a time of military defeat, invasion, and the collapse of a government. The longest-lasting republic in French history, the Third Republic fell when France's new leaders in essence gave control of the country to Germany. The decision to do so eventually resulted in a civil war between Vichy and the Resistance. For the purpose of this study, however, the timeframe is limited to the moment of invasion and defeat in 1940. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre* (1940) when he was a prisoner-of-war and Marc

Bloch's *L'Étrange défaite* (1946, posthumous) was culled together by the author between July and September 1940 from notes taken from his military service during this rapid struggle. Differently from the other authors in this dissertation, Bloch and Sartre did not know the immediate repercussions of the event described. The works were written in the immediate aftermath of the German invasion, rather than after years of Vichy and Occupation dominance. This allows the writers to have some distance from the event, without the weight of the next historical moment imposing on their thoughts. Although they had no insight into the future, both men had very stable intellectual frameworks into which the events could be translated.

While each author and work in this dissertation is discussed in-depth with specific literary critics, there are some larger theories that inform my study. The writers in question all use the rhetoric of literature as a way to think through the crisis and imagine ways to respond to it. By looking at literary texts that portray the Revolutionary Terror, the Franco-Prussian War, and the *drôle de guerre*, I examine how authors sought to influence their historical realities. Considering the extent to which literature has participated in the French nation's formation and self-understanding, the importance of authors writing about contemporary events cannot be disregarded. For a theory of how authors 'seize' their physical reality and give readers access to historical events, I look to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946). Speaking of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Auerbach notes the extreme importance of historical knowledge, for both the writer and the reader, stating that certain scenes "would be almost incomprehensible without a most accurate and detailed knowledge of the political situation, the social stratification, and the economic circumstances of a perfectly definite historical moment."<sup>3</sup> The specificity of the historical events chosen for this study makes it equally important to understand how

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<sup>3</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 455.

contemporary issues shaped the literature created. While it is certainly true that some of the texts to be discussed have an allegorical framework, there is a sense of immediacy and urgency present in all of the works.

Literature can also be seen as representative of an ethical struggle taking place in society. Sandy Petrey points to representations of the Terror as a means to illustrate the difference between a historical event and artistic renderings of the same event: “The events of the Terror in the French Revolution are one thing, the ways human consciousness has articulated them are something else.”<sup>4</sup> The choices made by writers are just as political as the incidents described. As particularly highlighted in my first chapter, rhetorical choices can be especially important in setting the tone for the work. Revolutionary terms are used by both Sade and Bruno to convey a disdain for the political process that brought about the régime change. We will see that the authors either practice or oppose a form of linguistic terrorism, best described by Jean Paulhan in his 1941 *Fleurs de Tarbes, ou la Terreur dans les lettres*. According to Paulhan, Terrorist writers demand continual invention and renewal, because “Terror” represents a decisive turning point.<sup>5</sup> Authors must express themselves despite writing in times of tremendous upheaval: “What Terror wants is not so much for a writer to be inventive, different, or unique, but for him to express himself and to make himself understood *in spite of* his difference.”<sup>6</sup> While all the authors in question wrote in time of turmoil, not all of them addressed the question of rhetoric. Hugo and Verne use the conflict between the historical and familial duties to highlight certain ethical choices, whether they be for the benefit of the family or the *patrie*.

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<sup>4</sup> Sandy Petrey, *History in the Text: “Quatrevingt-Treize” and the French Revolution* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Paulhan, *The Flowers of Tarbes, or Terror in Literature*, trans. Michael Syrotinski (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

Adding to the ethical struggle associated with literary representations, literature can also be an attempt to make sense of traumatic events. Texts, like physical monuments, can communicate a sense of struggle present at a certain point in time to subsequent generations. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: “A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggle.”<sup>7</sup> The search for sense does not come from monuments or historical facts; rather one must interpret events in light of circumstances surrounding the given moments and their return in “persistent sensations” even centuries later. Deleuze and Guattari’s observations about the nature of philosophy can easily be transferred to literature, which also must “determine its moment, its occasion and circumstances, its landscapes and personae, its conditions and unknowns.”<sup>8</sup> As with any other art form, literature is created in a specific circumstance, but can continue to communicate its sense for generations to come.

Literature often serves as a bridge from the past to the present. Denis Hollier’s introduction to his *A New History of French Literature* (1989) points out that books, along with other forms of art, are physical objects that can move through time and space, transmitting ideas far beyond their original scope. Henry Rousso’s *Vichy Syndrome* (1987) describes how key moments survive beyond their chronological existence and extend their influence over time and society, often through the use of literary works. Both of these theoretical texts highlight the power of written works to transcend the events surrounding their conception to impact society at

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<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 176.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



large. I have chosen texts that meet these criteria and that seek to influence concepts of national identity during moments of crisis.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1948) addresses the all-important role that literature can (and should) play in the world. Writing in the aftermath of World War II, there was little question that literature must be "engagée," and that writers have a duty to themselves, to their art, and to society to effect change. Although Sartre presents this concept as an eternal truth, this literary mission seems to be recognized by authors in traumatic circumstances. All of the authors in this study share circumstances that threaten the nation and a sense of their literary mission. To speak is an action, and a writer "désigne, démontre, ordonne, refuse, interpelle, supplie, insulte, persuade, insinue"<sup>9</sup> – in other words, he must act. The authors in question wrote with a specific purpose in mind. Some wrote to glorify France, like Jules Verne; some wrote to give their countrymen advice, like Victor Hugo, Marc Bloch, and Jean-Paul Sartre; while still others wrote to point out humanity's failings, in a hope to correct them for the future, like the Marquis de Sade and Louis de Bruno.

The historical context for a story plays an immense role in its message and reception. Hayden White points out that, as elements of a story, historical events are, by themselves, "value-neutral."<sup>10</sup> While this may be true, the immediate objection is raised that no choice made by an author is "value-neutral." For example, Sartre's decision to write a play using the Nativity as its theme, rather than a more contemporary setting allows the text to take on wider meanings than a prisoner-of-war recreational activity. All of the works in this study require in-depth consideration of how writers contextualize their stories. How society uses and learns from a text

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 25.

<sup>10</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 431.

is as important to consider as the writing of the text itself. Benedict Anderson points out that historiographical contexts adopted by each society eventually become “nationally defined,”<sup>11</sup> leading to incorporation in that society’s future formation and self-understanding. France’s moments of crisis have frequently led its writers to assume the lead in guiding its people through and beyond these upheavals. Often, in times of governmental turmoil or collapse, the only steady sense of direction has come from France’s long tradition of *littérature engagée*.

In addition to literary theories, this study relies heavily on theories of nationalism, and how national identity is established and maintained. The term ‘nation’ refers to the cultural, historical, and political dimensions of a people. Benedict Anderson puts some limits on the term with his belief that nations are finite (i.e., territorially limited) sovereign communities.<sup>12</sup> He theorizes that nations are imagined political communities, relying on print capitalism, historiographical consciousness, and history to tie groups to each other and to the nation. For Anderson, “official nationalism” began as a conscious, self-protecting policy on the part of the state,<sup>13</sup> including state-sanctioned memory and forgetting, in which historical wars can be presented as “family history,”<sup>14</sup> as we will see in Hugo and Verne.

A direct extension of Anderson’s “imagined communities” can be seen in Arjun Appadurai’s ideoscapes and mediascapes, both of which can be used to describe how literature directly impacts society. Ideoscapes are the ideologies of states, as well as the counter-ideologies of movements, around which nation-states organize their political cultures.<sup>15</sup> Mediascapes are the distribution and dissemination of information, including images and

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<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Revised Edition (New York: Verso, 1991), 118.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>15</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 36.

narratives that influence public opinion.<sup>16</sup> This dissertation first explains the ideoscapes present during the creation of the works in question, then moves on to the expression of these movements in the media chosen.

Many theorists, including Anthony D. Smith, Étienne Balibar, and Dominique Schnapper insist on the nation's integrationist elements, meaning its ability to bring together diverse groups through the use of national myths and common memories. Balibar sees national identity as a product of "idées universelles d'histoire, d'identité, de violence ou de politique, toujours encore polarisées par le rapport à la nation."<sup>17</sup> Nations are frequently based on ethnic identifications, but French nationhood is more commonly based on a cultural community rather than an ethnic one.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, within the same culture, integrationist rhetoric is still necessary to mediate class divides and ideological positions. Schnapper sees modern Frenchmen as replacing feelings of civic duty toward the state with an affective sentiment: "The sentimental attachment of the French to the uniqueness of their history and culture has replaced the adhesion of citizens to the French political project."<sup>19</sup> She sees this shift toward sentimental attachment as a recent phenomenon, but I believe that it can be seen throughout the course of post-Revolutionary France, where modern capitalist society and political disagreement on régime changes brought about repeated crises in the affective identification of the French people with their nation-state.

For many scholars, France is best defined not as a 'nation-state,' but as a 'state-nation,'<sup>20</sup> meaning that the nation evolved from and draws its power from the state. Although often

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>17</sup> Étienne Balibar, *Nous, citoyens d'Europe? Les frontières, l'État, le peuple* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2001), 32.

<sup>18</sup> Louk Hagendoorn et al, eds., *European Nations and Nationalism: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives* (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), 70.

<sup>19</sup> Dominique Schnapper, *Community of Citizens: On the Modern Idea of Nationality*, trans. Séverine Rosée (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 162-163.

<sup>20</sup> Jack Hayward, *The One and Indivisible French Republic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 17.

defined as synonymous with ‘nation,’ the ‘state’ deals with the territorial, legal, and political dimensions of a society. It is the administrative component necessary for a government. According to Rogers Brubaker, the state is based on territory, not membership,<sup>21</sup> with citizenship being defined as an exclusionary concept, omitting not only foreigners, but stateless persons.<sup>22</sup> The institutions inherent in the state provide legal and historical continuity to the nation. Louk Hagendoorn and José Pepels believe that the French state is integrally tied to the nation:

The state itself acted as a driving force of social change. Introducing compulsory, public, and meritocratic education turned ‘peasants into Frenchmen’ and incorporated migrants in the secular French republic. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this process produced the modern French nation. Since then, the idea of the republic as a normative form of statehood has been central to French collective nationality.<sup>23</sup>

The French Revolution inherited the idea of a centralized state, while at the same time, it tried to shift supremacy from an absolutist monarchy to the people. The nineteenth century continued the struggle to establish a nation using a state-centered framework. State-supported education and oversight of the military prove to be important factors in many of the texts discussed in this study.

Although much has been said about nationalism’s role in creating or maintaining national identities, there is still much debate about which comes first – the nation or the sentiment. “Nationalism” describes the entire process through which nations grow, but more commonly it is linked specifically to the sentiments, ideology, and discourse associated with the nation. Anthony D. Smith posits that nations are defined and shaped by myths and memories about common ancestry and culture, while nationalism describes the sentiments engendered by attachment to the nation. Thus, nationalism can occur both before and after the establishment of

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<sup>21</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Hagendoorn et al, 25.

a nation-state. Smith sees nations growing in one of two possible ways. His “gastronomic” theory of nations<sup>24</sup> describes a nation formed from mixing together multiple cultures, religions, and ethnic groups. A “geologically” formed nation is the result of layers of shared experiences, often involving rediscovery and reinvention of the shared past, as seen in nineteenth-century France’s return to its medieval roots. The work in this study will rely more heavily on the “geological” theory, showing the importance of literature in creating and reinforcing a sense of shared experience.

The discussion of nationalism brings us to the question of how people identify with a nation. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) is a landmark theory of how groups come together to form nations. He refers to the concept of “mass ceremonies” in which all members of a society participate. These ceremonies can be anything from reading daily newspapers to celebrating national holidays. The importance lies in the community member’s knowledge that his fellow citizens are also participating, although he may never see them engaged in these activities. *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984-1992), Pierre Nora’s monumental study on the importance of group identification and memory, shows the necessity of common sites. Nora points out that these *lieux de mémoire* can be “toute unité significative, d’ordre matériel ou idéal, dont la volonté des hommes ou le travail du temps a fait un élément symbolique du patrimoine mémoriel d’une quelque communauté,”<sup>25</sup> meaning that they need not be simply physical monuments, but can also be shared memories. Novels, plays, and historical testimonies like the ones used in this study are additional tools that can be used in these “mass ceremonies” or *lieux de mémoire*. Whether they still fulfill this role or not, the authors in question felt they were, through their work, officiating at the altar of the French nation.

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<sup>24</sup> See Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chapter 6.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol 3, *Les France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 20.

John Crowley highlights the particular importance of cultural continuity to the French nation, whereas other countries might more heavily rely on other factors, such as race and ethnicity: “History is written in national and statist terms. Everything that has occurred within the current territory of France [...] is regarded as *histoire de France* (in other words, teleologically, as the historical construction of the French state and nation). Therefore the emphasis is on continuity.”<sup>26</sup> Anthony Marx’s *Faith in Nation* (2003) also points to the power of myths of common past glory overriding the reality of internal conflicts. These myths then become the basis of national history, and another means of self-identification for the nation.

The French Revolution is, for many scholars, the beginning of the modern nation-state. It signaled the death of the Ancien Régime and the dawn of a new republican era in France. Establishing a new national identity quickly became a priority for the Revolution’s leaders. Language, weights and measures, dress, and national education were just some of the reforms that took place in founding a new régime and national mentality. Even the calendar was re-created to signify the beginning of a new era. Throughout the Revolution, but particularly in the Terror (1793-1794), it could be extremely dangerous to appear anything but patriotic to the new cause.

A myriad of authors have written about how the culture of the modern French nation-state was founded. Foremost among these scholars are Robert Darnton and R.R. Palmer. Darnton examines the social ramifications of the Revolution for historical mentalities in his fundamental *The Great Cat Massacre* (1985). The text investigates how eighteenth-century France saw the world, and how culture reacted to the intense changes taking place during this century. In his *Twelve who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (1941, first

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<sup>26</sup> Hagendoorn et al, 91.

edition), Palmer offers a much more chronologically-limited study of how the Terror shaped the outcome of the Revolution and determined the future of French politics and culture for centuries to come. In direct contrast to Darnton's approach, Palmer studies the Revolution 'from above,' focusing on the Committee of Public Safety and the decisions made by them to continue the Revolution to its bloody conclusion. By juxtaposing 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches, we are able to see how both politicians and newly created citizens were indoctrinated into a new national consciousness. The authors in this study situate themselves along a spectrum between these two approaches when attributing responsibility for change and upheaval.

Continuing the First Republic's ambitions of instituting a national culture, the Third Republic sought to solidify the nation into a coherent political unit, based on a common language and history. According to Eugen Weber, by the 1880s, the polarization of political issues was used for "training apprentice citizens to new awareness and independence."<sup>27</sup> Through the use of mandatory public education, linguistic standardization, and the conscious creation of 'French' history, the government hoped to avoid future uprisings like the disastrous Paris Commune. The plan was to rely on a common history that could reverberate through the citizenry rather than allowing continued dissonance.

Reunifying the country after the Franco-Prussian War also meant successfully addressing France's past. Anthony Marx discusses the importance of tying the masses to the elite. It is crucial for national unity that the state seek to consolidate popular allegiance. Part of creating French history meant appealing to France's past glories: reviving national epics like the *Chanson de Roland*, the 'civilizing mission' much touted under the Revolution, and the re-establishment of her role as oldest daughter of the Church. This revitalization of French culture

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<sup>27</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 274.

and institutionalization of national identity served to counteract the defeat suffered under the previous regime and paid for by its heirs. As Marx states: “myths of common past glory and unifying sacrifice [push] aside the reality of prior internal conflict, forging the image of a coherent unit.”<sup>28</sup> Common myths, selective remembrance, and forging the image of a coherent unit were all common devices used in the aftermath of the Terror, the defeat at Sedan and the Commune, and the Nazi invasion.

Marx goes on to point out the importance of defining the Other in conflicts; someone to whom the remaining group can feel superior. In the case of the fall of the Second Empire, the French state was vanquished, but it was the Communards who were to pay a high price for the national defeat. Not only were they brutally repressed and executed by the French government, with Prussian blessing, they were then relegated to near invisibility in the public domain for many years to come. A partial rehabilitation came about through the literature of the 1880s, but the stories written about the events portrayed the admirable Communards as simple, honest men who fought a losing battle for their beliefs. The stories focus on individuals, never on the fighters as an ideological group. This emphasis on the individual was contrary to the norm for other nineteenth-century art forms, most specifically monuments, which were almost exclusively dedicated to group efforts.

History is determined by those already in the community, and the Communards had been forcibly removed from the French nation. Immediately following the War, the Third Republic concentrated much effort on defining and educating its future citizens. The country became focused on ways to form a cohesive nation from the chaotic memory of its recent monarchic, imperial, and republican past. Civic ceremonies had taken on national characteristics, the French

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<sup>28</sup> Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford UP, 2003), 31.



language was being standardized at the price of regional dialects, and monuments were erected to foster the new-found sense of national unity, leaving any reminders of internal dissent either to be removed or to fall into decay.

As Pierre Nora reminds us, memory is in permanent evolution, while history calls for analysis and critical discourse. Societies choose representations that define their concept of self. The use of the eighteenth-century Terror as a setting was a conscious and political choice for nineteenth-century writers. France had just survived yet another devastating war which had pitted Frenchmen against each other and against a foreign enemy. In many respects, the disastrous ending of the Franco-Prussian War echoed the violence and chaos of the Revolution, with the Commune being a potent reminder of the original and deadly Paris Commune.

The *drôle de guerre* period of World War II is in some ways the most difficult period of the three studied here to find clear examples of nationalist rhetoric. Historiographer Hayden White perhaps best sums up the sense of chaotic soul-searching prevalent in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century: “Everywhere there was a growing suspicion that Europe’s feverish rummaging among the ruins of its past expressed less a sense of firm control over the present than an unconscious fear of a future too horrible to contemplate.”<sup>29</sup> Attempting to give the nation cultural roots, many writers focused on tales of national glory, just as their predecessors had in the nineteenth century, by reaching into France’s distant past. By looking to the past, they were able to ignore the impending storm that was about to sweep the continent.

The Battle of France, and the nation’s subsequent defeat, took place in such a rapid timeframe that many writers were unable to react before they were faced with German

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<sup>29</sup> Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 35.

occupation. For this reason, writers like Marc Bloch and Jean-Paul Sartre remain exemplary sources of what the nation was experiencing at this time.

In order to determine which historical crises to treat in this study, I first had to consider what constitutes an ‘event.’ I define an event as something that happens at a given place and time, and which has an impact beyond its chronological moment and / or geographical borders. Two theorists are particularly helpful in understanding the theory of the event. The first is Alain Badiou, whose fundamental *L’Être et l’événement* (1988) describes the event as something that compels a new way of being. The Revolution, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Occupation certainly ushered in new political eras and ways of thinking about the nation in France. As an extension of his theory, Badiou develops the concept of “fidelity to the event,” which describes how we react to an event: “To be faithful to an event is to move within the situation that this event has supplemented by *thinking* [...] the situation ‘according to’ the event.”<sup>30</sup> Literature is a prime example of how society adapts to events and attempts to make sense from the chaos surrounding it. Stylistic devices, such as allegory and metaphor, are facile means to “move within the situation” without overtly endangering the writer.

The other key theorist I use to understand discussion of the event is Jacques Rancière. In his *Les Noms de l’Histoire* (1992), he highlights the importance of founding narratives to the dissemination of the event. Rancière reminds us that “Speakers never speak in vain – their speech is always full of meaning,”<sup>31</sup> with speeches becoming metaphors of the time period represented. In order to understand the truth of these utterances, we must examine contemporary representations of events, including letters, fictional creations, and newspapers.

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<sup>30</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), 41.

<sup>31</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History*, trans. Hassan Melehy (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1994), 46.

The last major theoretical framework for this dissertation comes from the work of historiographers like Hayden White and Pierre Nora. In *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), White notes that modern fiction tries to liberate man from history, claiming that the historical profession is extremely conservative and that history may result from accidental circumstances.<sup>32</sup> While literature and history may not have always been seen as productive partners, White calls upon the next generation of historians to “expose the historically conditioned character of the historical discipline [...] and to aid in the assimilation of history to a higher kind of intellectual inquiry,”<sup>33</sup> one in which history and the arts can work together to better understand the relationship between the two. Explaining how historical events are used in literature, White points to the autonomy writers have vis-à-vis their creations: “considered as potential elements of a story, historical events are value-neutral.”<sup>34</sup> Authors decide which events to use and how to present them, in order to create a range of reactions in their readers. Historical representations are used as icons to describe events that take place in the narrative, while at the same time rendering the events chosen familiar to the reader. In this way, the narrative mediates between events and conventional plot structures to “endow unfamiliar events and situations with meanings.”<sup>35</sup> Writing historical texts thus means placing events within a given context by relating them as a part of some conceivable whole.

Pierre Nora’s monumental *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984-1992) analyzes the role of collective memory in society. In his introduction to this multi-volume work, “Entre Mémoire et Histoire,” Nora discusses the relationship between history and memory. According to him, history frequently tries to repress, demolish, or reconstruct memory: “La mémoire est toujours

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<sup>32</sup> White, *Tropics*, 28-29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

suspecte à l'histoire, dont la mission vraie est de la détruire et de la refouler. L'histoire est délégitimation du passé vécu.”<sup>36</sup> By “delegitimizing” a remembered past, history can rob a people of its previous identity. Nora illustrates this idea by demonstrating how civic memory has evolved in France. National memory during the Revolution became citizen memory with the advent of Republican schools, eventually emerging as patrimonial memory in twentieth-century France. This evolution is possible because memory is embodied in living societies, which are by definition in permanent evolution. Memory is subject to remembering and forgetting, and society frequently only deals with the facts that suit a given moment. This collective willingness to forget is perfectly demonstrated in Ernest Renan's *What is a Nation?*, when he states:

Forgetting – I would even go so far as to say historical error – is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

While this complete forgetting is a bit unrealistic, it is important that a unified nation not hold grudges against its citizens for historic events.

Unlike collective memory (or forgetting), history is a reconstruction of what is no longer, calling for analysis and discourse. Nora believes that memory has only had two legitimate forms of expression: historical and literary. While he acknowledges that both methods of relating memory have been exercised, he considers that they have existed as separate entities.<sup>38</sup> Historian Henry Rousso takes an opposing stance to Nora's theories, seeing history as integral to the construction of national memory, stating that national collective memory's primary purpose

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<sup>36</sup> Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol 1, *La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?,” trans. Martin Thom in *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11.

<sup>38</sup> Nora, *La République*, 43.

is to structure national identity.<sup>39</sup> While I personally support Rousso's position, believing that national memory is widely founded on historical interpretations and literary creations, one cannot discount Nora's argument that history and literature have long been considered as separate disciplines, each disdaining aspects of the other. As all of my chosen texts admirably illustrate, it is impossible to separate history, literature, and national identity. Indeed, one of the texts examined in this work was written by a noted historian who felt compelled to share his thoughts about the survival of the nation.

My first chapter examines the Marquis de Sade and a virtually unknown émigré writer, Louis de Bruno. These authors wrote during and immediately after the Revolutionary Terror, taking opposing views of the Revolution and its effects on the French nation. Sade's well-known *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) contains a fabricated political pamphlet entitled "Français encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains," in which Sade urges his fellow citizens to push the Revolution to yet more audacious behavior, complaining that the movement has not gone far enough. The other text, Bruno's *Lioncel, ou l'Emigré, nouvelle historique* (1800), is heavily critical of the Revolution that cost so many people their lives and that disrupted an entire way of life. The Bruno novella was a best-seller with its release in 1800; since the mid-nineteenth century, however, it has gone virtually unstudied. The comparison of these two writers illuminates the impact of this critical moment that would give birth to modern France.

My second chapter addresses the staging of the Revolutionary wars and the Terror in literature written after the humiliating French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Here, I focus mainly on two well-known authors writing war-time novels. Victor Hugo's *Quatrevingt-treize* (1874) is the story of a family split apart by the Revolution and both sides' struggles to do

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<sup>39</sup> Denis Peschanski, Michael Pollak, and Henry Rousso, *Histoire politique et sciences sociales* (Paris: Éditions Complexe, 1991), 251.

what they feel is right for *la patrie*. Jules Verne's *Le Chemin de France* (1887) tells the tale of a French soldier visiting his sister in Prussia in 1792. When war between the two countries breaks out, he is forced into service for the enemy, all the while trying to get back to his homeland. Given the historical events taking place during the writing of these stories, it is essential to understand the authors' choice of the French Revolution as the setting for their tales. At a time when the French nation was once again at a critical moment in its history, literature needed to return to the original crisis as a way to come to terms with the present.

The present also determines how the past is represented. In both Hugo and Verne, the focus shifts from internal terror to external threats to the integrity of the French nation. This shift is why the last chapter of my dissertation deals with the Occupation of 1940. In it, I examine a little-known nativity play by Jean-Paul Sartre, best known for his existentialist philosophical writing. *Bariona ou le fils du tonnerre* (1940) is set at the time of Christ's birth in a Roman-occupied village. The play was written and performed while Sartre was a prisoner of war, but he found the work to be of such poor quality that he would not allow it to be restaged until some of his students rediscovered it decades later. Sartre's story was disguised in terms of a nativity play, but was obviously intended as a direct message of hope to the captive French soldiers at a time of profound national and personal disarray. Along with the Sartre text, I analyze a non-fiction work by Marc Bloch, *L'Étrange défaite* (1946, posthumous). Arguably the most influential medievalist of his time and a member of the French Resistance, Bloch was arrested and tortured at the hands of the Nazis, leaving his observations about the events leading to France's most recent downfall to be published posthumously by his fellow intellectuals.

The texts used for this study represent authors from very different personal and ideological backgrounds, but they all insist on a political vision of the nation. Many of the

stories are presented as allegories, typically as a means to escape censorship or to appeal to a wider audience. The Marquis de Sade chose to veil political indoctrination within scenes of a sexual orgy, while Jean-Paul Sartre couched his critique of Nazi occupation in biblical terms. Other authors, like Louis de Bruno and Marc Bloch were very forthright in presenting their views on recent events, preferring to appeal directly to a sympathetic audience. In any case, all of the texts were written to support some sort of nationalist agenda, whether they dealt with the current crisis or the future of France.

Because the emphasis in this study is on the message conveyed and the sense attributed to historical events, the choice of genre does not play a large role in my thematic approach. Within my dissertation, I look at novels, novellas, a play, and testimonial writing, all of which accomplish the general goals of literature when confronted with historical trauma. While it is important to consider how writers express themselves, the genre of this expression ultimately takes a secondary role to the authors' intended message. I also rely quite heavily on correspondence, which provides the authors' private thoughts on their projects, rather than looking solely at the finished works. Correspondence serves as a contemporaneous document, not allowing the luxury of hindsight when considering the circumstances in which the work was composed. My study examines how writers tried to influence their immediate situations, thus negating the impact of chronologically subsequent texts. Finally, correspondence helps to understand the writer's intent, free of censorship or publishing pressures. For example, a difficult author to pin down, Sade can be very contradictory and satirical. As Neil Schaeffer notes, when one tries to examine Sade's writing, "one is struck by a stroboscopic, dizzying fluctuation between extremes,"<sup>40</sup> making an examination of his personal thoughts imperative.

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<sup>40</sup> Neil Schaeffer, *The Marquis de Sade: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 461.

For Jules Verne, it was not his personal beliefs that were in question; rather, it was the power exercised by his editor that frequently led his texts into unintended territory. Without studying the exchange of ideas between the two men, it would be impossible to read between the lines and find Verne's true meanings.

Stylistic devices become very important when writers are faced with potentially dangerous situations. As previously mentioned, allegory is a common choice for writers of crises. In *Allegories of the Purge* (1998), Phil Watts points to allegory's relation to history as "paradoxical," meaning that while it frequently serves specific political goals, it also avoids specific references, making it "the very antithesis of history."<sup>41</sup> As such, allegories must be read with care, taking into account the conditions surrounding their creation. Gilles Deleuze helps to shed some light on this paradoxical territory with his theory of difference and repetition. Repetition is "an extrinsic difference between objects represented by the same concept,"<sup>42</sup> by which he means that events will never be represented twice in the same way. Extending this concept to literature, authors use allegory and metaphor to talk about events, as a way to represent a specific moment in their own terms.

By juxtaposing a well-known text or author with a less canonical one, I reveal unexpected underlying political perspectives in each of the works. The Marquis de Sade is an extremely well-known author, but his "Français, encore un effort" is infrequently given attention as a political commentary, and is, indeed, often left out of editions of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Sade's work is used as a foil for Louis de Bruno's *Lioncel*, a best-seller in 1800, but virtually unheard of since 1804. The next set of texts are both by prolific writers, Victor Hugo

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<sup>41</sup> Philip Watts, *Allegories of the Purge: How Literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 26.



and Jules Verne. Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize* has been widely studied as a historical novel, but little work has been done to situate it in its contemporary context. Frequently dismissed as a children's author, Verne wrote a rarely-studied wartime novella, *Le Chemin de France*, also set during the Revolution. The last texts analyzed are once again from well-known authors, although many people are unaware of existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's first play, *Bariona*, a Nativity-themed tale. Marc Bloch, the last author considered, was a famous medieval historian, who wrote a testimonial of his experiences during the *drôle de guerre*. My use of texts as case studies offers a framework for future studies of historical and nationalist narratives, which could easily be applied to other epochs and works.

While this study considers six works from three historical periods, there are major themes that tie all of the texts together. Fear, power, and indoctrination are readily seen in the texts as means of controlling and influencing national identity. Sade uses these tools to train new libertines and to impose control on their environment. In his political pamphlet, he expands these devices to the general public, using Revolutionary rhetoric to appeal to the masses. His Revolutionary counterpart, Bruno, sets up fear and power against the purity and goodness of his protagonists. For both Hugo and Verne, the struggle to establish the First Republic required the use of these tools. Hugo plays out the clash as a family conflict, while Verne describes it in terms of patriotic indoctrination. Writing at a moment of extreme duress, both Sartre and Bloch represented contemporary conditions in their works. Bloch wrote a testimonial account to help make sense of what the nation had just endured, while Sartre was forced by circumstances to write a thinly-veiled allegory of the German occupation. The writers insisted on the strength of fear and indoctrination to influence both their fictional characters and the nation.

The other major theme that ties the works together is the role of war. Only the Marquis de Sade chooses to ignore the wartime difficulties present during his writing, a conscious choice to focus exclusively on ideological and moral questions facing the nation. The other writers rely heavily on their respective wars, whether as the setting for their stories or as hidden backdrops for their political messages. Bruno, Hugo, and Verne developed their texts from wartime problems and suffering, while Sartre and Bloch wrote during an ongoing war, thus giving their texts immediate *raisons d'être*. In addition to sharing their message of national identity, the authors also had to worry about the impact of foreign invasion on their country. Whether the occupiers were welcomed or not by the authors, any invasion represented a threat to French sovereignty.

The dissertation chapters are presented in a chronological manner, beginning with the Revolutionary Terror and ending with the Occupation. Within each chapter, I have maintained a standard structure. The relevant historical and political background is given, followed by a discussion of the first author and his work, then the period's second author and work. I have set up the texts chosen not only as case studies of the specific event for each period, but also as models of how literature responds to moments of crisis. The works are cross-referenced as frequently as possible, showing how writers use existing cultural knowledge to continue to build their arguments for or against certain ideals.

## **2.0 “MAKE TERROR THE ORDER OF THE DAY”: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TERROR IN MARQUIS DE SADE AND LOUIS DE BRUNO.**

“In the history of any country compare the periods of  
anarchy with those during which order was most vigorously  
maintained by the most vigorously enforced laws, and  
recognize that only at moments when the laws were held in  
contempt do stupendous actions occur.”  
- Marquis de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*

Terror is one of the most powerful forces known to mankind, particularly when used as a political tool. The Terror of 1793-1794 was used to control an unstable populace and to guide the Revolution in a new direction. While everyone was affected by the ever-changing political régimes of the time, it was particularly difficult for writers during the late eighteenth century. The French Revolution itself came about through violence, but also through ideology and language. Language is always vulnerable to perversion and distortion, and literature can easily exploit that vulnerability. Authors tried to change or divert public opinion in order to share their visions of what was happening to the nation. They tried, each in their own way, to influence the country onto the path they believed would benefit it most. For some, they tried to accomplish this through remorse; for others, it was by pushing for even more outrageous developments. The infamous Marquis de Sade was unashamedly one of the men who would insist on further action, while the relatively unknown Louis de Bruno sought a return to Ancien Régime conservatism.

This chapter will explore the contributions to Revolutionary literature and the search for French identity made by both men.

Existing scholarship either limits or ignores the work of Sade and Bruno, in regards to their political and philosophical perspectives. In the case of Sade, most scholars limit their studies to the sexual discourse or pornographic elements of his work. Those who do address Sade's political ideologies typically exclude the sexual themes found in the stories from their studies. Separating the sexual and philosophical portions of his works results in a distorted reading of the author's intentions. Reading the texts in their entirety gives us a way not to consider Sade as an aberration or a monster to be 'explained' in psychoanalytical terms, as critics such as Simone de Beauvoir would have; rather, we can see in the texts a writer who is readable in a literary, philosophical, and political perspective.

While Sade's works are heavily studied, albeit in a fragmented fashion, Louis de Bruno has been virtually ignored by modern scholarship. A best-selling author from 1800 to 1804, his only original novel, *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré*, is a quintessential émigré story. Its gothic setting and storyline are testament to the chaos and terror of the Revolution, and its purpose is to exhort expiation of the country's sins. While the work's popularity did not survive the pacification of France, his critique of a violent, totalitarian régime is repeated throughout the nineteenth century. By reading Sade and Bruno in direct contrast with each other, both authors' methods and intentions become clear. In the comparison, Sade becomes even more readable in a contemporary and historical context, while Bruno shines as a harbinger of counter-revolutionary ideology.

## 2.1 THE TERROR IN FRANCE

French historian François Furet sees the Terror as a means to “organiser, systématiser, accélérer la répression des adversaires intérieurs de la République.”<sup>43</sup> This systematic repression had one major goal: to entrench the power with the people, as defined by the newly established Republic. According to Furet, “la Terreur est une revendication, fondée sur des convictions ou des croyances politiques, un trait de mentalité caractéristique de l’activisme révolutionnaire.”<sup>44</sup> With the people firmly in control, the power previously associated with the king could no longer be wielded by the Revolution’s enemies.

Of course, one of the most pressing problems facing the new leaders of the Revolution was to define just who “the people” were. The *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen* found at the beginning of the 1793 Constitution specifically refers to “the people” as the source of all freedom, stating that “sovereignty resides in the people; it is one and indivisible, imprescriptible, and inalienable.”<sup>45</sup> One can see a definite shift regarding the importance given to “the people” from 1789 to 1793. The original 1789 *Déclaration* reads: “The source of all sovereignty lies essentially in the Nation. No corporate body, no individual may exercise any authority that does not expressly emanate from it.” The rhetoric of the time spoke of equality

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<sup>43</sup> François Furet and Mona Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française: Événements* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 293.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 293-294.

<sup>45</sup> John Hall Stewart, *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 457.

and man's natural rights, but obvious limitations were implied in any discussion of citizenship and voting rights. Most obvious among the restrictions was that of gender. Few, if any, discussions of allowing women a voice in the process were taken seriously. Many of the more radical elements wanted voting rights given only to the *sans-culottes*, in direct confrontation with previous laws that allowed only propertied men to decide legislation. The concept of equal citizenship was pushed so far as to make the term *citoyen* the only acceptable form of address, anything else being seen as elitism and disrespect for the ideal of *fraternité*. In any case, almost every scheme involved elected representatives who would ultimately make the decisions necessary in running a country.

Although there was some effort to define “the people” or who would be eligible for citizenship, it was much easier to define these concepts negatively. Anyone outside of accepted standards would be denied citizenship and constitutional rights. Robespierre's 1794 *Report on the Principles of Political Morality* defines society's relation to the citizen. In it, he writes “the protection of society is due only to peaceable citizens: there are no citizens in the republic except republicans. The royalists and conspirators are nothing but foreigners to the republic – or, rather, enemies.”<sup>46</sup> The earlier Law of Suspects provides a long, and yet still vague, list of those persons deemed dangerous to national security. Included on the list are: “those who, by their conduct, associations, talk, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism and enemies of liberty;”<sup>47</sup> those who failed to perform their civic duties; former public functionaries not reinstated by the National Convention; relatives of *émigrés*; and of course, the *émigrés* themselves. The Law soon came to be seen as a death sentence for anyone arrested under its ambiguous terms. Many people, including the Marquis de Sade, would spend much

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<sup>46</sup> Paul H. Beik, ed. *The French Revolution* (New York: Walker and Company, 1970), 284.

<sup>47</sup> Stewart, 478.

time and effort proving that they had indeed fulfilled their civic duty and that they had no knowledge of any *émigré* or treasonous activity.

The most violent period of the Revolution, the Reign of Terror, began in September 1793 with the National Convention's vote to implement measures for the repression and punishment of internal traitors and ended in July one year later, with the execution of Robespierre and his cohorts. The government was "the first recognizably modern dictatorship,"<sup>48</sup> ruled by the twelve men who made up the Committee of Public Safety. Louis XVI's execution in January 1793 had called down the armies of Europe on France and had ended any hope of restoring the monarch to the throne. Price controls, the *levée en masse*, and civil war in the Vendée all contributed to the growing unease in France, and most specifically, in Paris.

Terror as a form of government quickly grew from the Committee's need to control and justify the Revolutionary regime. In his 5 February 1794 *Report on the Principles of Political Morality*, Robespierre explains the necessity of terror as a governing force:

If the driving force of popular government in peacetime is virtue, that of popular government during a revolution is both virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror is destructive; terror, without which virtue is impotent. Terror is only justice that is prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is thus an emanation of virtue; it is less a distinct principle than a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to the most pressing needs of the *patrie*.<sup>49</sup>

The intertwining of such powerful terms as virtue and justice with terror made the swift and brutal measures carried out under the Committee's directives seem not only inescapable, but desirable for the long-term peace of the nation.

The Terror was officially decreed by the National Convention, in a speech dated 5 September 1793. In this speech directed to the assembly, a large delegation of Parisian citizens

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<sup>48</sup> R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), "Preface to the Bicentennial Edition."

<sup>49</sup> Beik, 283.

demanded vigorous measures to protect the Revolution and punish counterrevolutionary activities. Jean-Nicolas Billaud-Varenne, one of the more impetuous members of the Committee of Public Safety, was delighted with the crowd's petition, pointing out that with Paris's enthusiastic backing, the Revolution could

finally exterminate the enemies of the revolution. [...] It is time that we settle the fate of the revolution; and indeed we must congratulate ourselves, since the very misfortunes of the people exalt its energy, and put us in a position to exterminate our enemies. [...] The moment to act has come, the time for deliberation has passed. [...] If the revolution drags on, it is because only half measures are ever taken. Let us leave it to feeble souls to worry about the results of the revolution. [...] Let us save the people: it will aid us; it wants liberty whatever the price.<sup>50</sup>

The crowds had grown weary of listening to political speeches; they now demanded decisive action. The Jacobin spokesman for the Parisian delegation responded to the politicians' speeches with a concrete request for action:

It is time that equality pass the scythe over every head. It is time to terrorize all conspirators. Well then! Legislators, make terror the order of the day. Let us be in a state of revolution, since counterrevolution is everywhere plotted by our enemies. Let the blade of the law hang over all who are guilty.<sup>51</sup>

It was with this dynamic exchange that the Terror was born. Soon to follow would be the Law of Suspects and the Declaration on Revolutionary Government. The Declaration lists the measures necessary for the creation and maintenance of a functioning system of terror. The provisional government would be "revolutionary until the peace" and anything interfering with the speedy execution of the government's decrees would be "punished as an attack on liberty."<sup>52</sup> All decrees and requests would be approved by the Committee of Public Safety, now established as the official governing head of France.

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<sup>50</sup> Billaud-Varenne in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 347.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>52</sup> Stewart, 480-481.



In contrast to authors who dealt with political topics were the true politicians of the time. These men did, of course, frequently publish their writings, but they were typically limited to decrees or speeches addressing the public good. Politicians such as Robespierre and Saint-Just wrote copiously, in an effort to persuade the people and to create the new laws necessary to replace the previous regime's rules. The more restrained Honoré de Mirabeau and the Marquis de Condorcet turned their attention to moderating the more dangerous elements they sensed in the Revolution. Although Mirabeau would die before the Revolution turned into the Terror, Condorcet fell to the guillotine at the height of the violence. Only with the deaths of Robespierre and Saint-Just would the Terror finally end.

Terrorists like Robespierre and Saint-Just devoted their literary efforts to the creation of governmental documents and decrees aimed at furthering the Revolution. In his proposed Declaration of Rights, Robespierre was very clear about the importance of freedom from tyranny. Many of the proclamations directly state man's inalienable right to individual liberty, but these same declarations are continuously paired with caveats to protect the greater rights of society. The statement "the law *may forbid* only whatever is injurious to society; it may order only whatever is useful thereto" is followed immediately by "Every law which *violates the inalienable rights* of man is essentially unjust and tyrannical; it is not a law at all." The right to private property rests ambiguous with "Property is the right of each and every citizen to enjoy and to dispose of the portion of property guaranteed to him by law." In case the citizen forgets where his true loyalty lies, he is reminded that "the right of property is limited, as are all others, by the obligation to respect the property of *others*."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Robespierre's Proposed Declaration of Rights, cited in Stewart, 431, my italics.

Another Revolutionary politician, Honoré de Mirabeau, author of *Essai sur le despotisme*, was a supporter of the monarchy despite his dislike of despotism, and did his best to promote the continued power of the ruling elite. Mirabeau was a popular and well-respected member of the National Assembly and he served to temper the more radical element for the first years of the Revolution. A contemporary of Mirabeau, Condorcet still maintained his Girondin moderation despite the Revolutionary themes that pervade his posthumous 1794 *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*. He believed that mankind was progressing toward virtue, but held that man must exhibit some sympathy toward members of his own society. Although he was opposed to organized religions, Condorcet also felt that the country should practice religious tolerance. Following his death while in prison in 1794, his remains were subsequently lost, but his coffin was ceremonially moved to the Panthéon in 1989 as part of the Revolution's bicentennial celebrations.

In addition to the politicians' speeches and decrees, many historical fictions were also produced during the Terror. Some of the more notable authors include André Chénier and Sénac de Meilhan. Chénier, the brother of playwright and politician Marie-Joseph Chénier, was a moderate Revolutionary who believed that the Revolution should have ended with the overthrow of the monarchy. Living abroad at the beginning of the Revolution, Chénier felt the compulsion to return to France despite the dangerous climate brewing in Paris. At the request of his compatriots, he provided some materials for the defense of Louis XVI, although his own brother voted for the king's death. Arrested for his scathingly witty remarks against the Committee of Public Safety, Chénier was executed a mere three days before the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Reign of Terror. One of the precursors of Romanticism, Chénier appealed to the public's

sensibilities through moving odes and political satire. He was widely regarded as an innocent victim of a voracious machine and he rapidly became a martyr for the counterrevolutionaries.

A contemporary of Chénier, Sénac de Meilhan took the opposite approach to riding out the Revolutionary storm. Emigrating in 1790, he wrote his most famous counterrevolutionary work, *L'Émigré*, a sentimental novel that deals with the trials and tribulations of those fleeing the Reign of Terror. Sénac continued to roam Europe after the end of the Revolution, but never again returned to France. He preferred to critique those in power from a distance, appealing to the country's sense of responsibility and empathy after the Terrorist reign had passed.

Both Chénier and Sénac were contemporaries of the Revolution and were affected deeply by its machinations. Later authors would also be consumed by the need to explain and use the Revolution for their own purposes. Germaine de Staël, daughter of Louis XVI's finance minister Jacques Necker, was active in the politics of the period. As the daughter of a Swiss statesman born in Paris, she was intimately involved in contemporary events, but she was able to distance herself physically when she was no longer welcome in Parisian politics. De Staël enjoyed high political status, both as lover of the Comte de Narbonne and Benjamin Constant, and as wife of a Swedish minister. She was also named a cultural ambassador to the French court in her own right. Madame de Staël drew attention to her political beliefs through her stories, lauding other cultures and depicting noble sentiments in contrast to current events in France. Among the works that compared France with other countries are *De l'Allemagne* and *Corinne, ou l'Italie*. Earlier works dealt specifically with the historical events of the time, including *Considérations sur la Révolution française* and *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*.

A contemporary of Germaine de Staël, François-René de Chateaubriand was even more explicit in his opposition to current political events. Refusing to join the royalists early in the Revolution, Chateaubriand escaped to America until word of the king's aborted flight to Varennes reached him. Chateaubriand returned to fight for the monarchy in the so-called *armée des princes* until he was wounded, moving to England in 1793. There, he composed his *Essai sur les révolutions*, which parallels France's current upheaval with ancient revolutions. The emotional and religious appeal of his works, including *Atala* and *René*, are attempts to come to terms with the suffering he sees in the world around him.

While writing during the Revolution was a political act, not all writers were necessarily politicians. André Chénier was involved in politics as much as any of his contemporaries, but he was first and foremost a writer. Sénac de Meilhan experienced some success in both fields, but never achieved overwhelming recognition from his contemporaries for either his written works or his political posts. Although her fame was sometimes precarious, Madame de Staël enjoyed immense, if somewhat precarious, fame as both a writer and female politician. Chateaubriand emerged from exile to become a functionary under Napoléon and, later, a diplomat and minister under the Restoration. In fact, it was his literature as well as his loyalty which earned him these later honors.

One of the two authors who will be a major focus in this chapter, Louis de Bruno, also wrote against the Revolution. Despite the extremely political views laid out in his *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique*, Bruno only wrote the work in response to the atmosphere surrounding him. Bruno came from a milieu that formed his character and that of his family for generations. The Bruno family was filled with soldiers and minor bureaucrats, serving the monarchy in various posts. These situations tied the family directly to the French aristocracy's

concerns of European alliances, Imperial and colonial enterprises, and French-owned local interests. His only original literary contribution was his novella *Lioncel*, which was an international success from 1800-1804. Bruno's life was, instead, much more centered on his service to the crown and family connections. In the novella, it becomes clear that Bruno thought the Revolution a hugely regrettable mistake led by a small group of bloodthirsty animals, not a surprising interpretation of the events by someone from his background.

The case of the Marquis de Sade is much more complex, yet he, too remained primarily a writer rather than a politician. While Sade may have dabbled in politics, he devoted the majority of his time to writing the plays and novels for which he is now known. A lifelong pursuit, writing became Sade's obsession in times of personal and political crisis. Staying in France throughout the Revolution, Sade pushed continuously for ever-increasing freedoms, both through his political involvement and in his works. Individual liberty was a concept that obsessed the Marquis throughout his life and the Revolution seemed to provide the perfect opportunity to make his stand. He felt that writers had the responsibility to emancipate their readers wherever possible. In his 1791 *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu*, Sade takes other writers to task for their restraint and bad advice. Justine's libertine sister Juliette is lost in part due to unfit instruction, "pervertie par de mauvais conseils et des livres dangereux."<sup>54</sup> Pandering to the widespread belief about writers corrupting innocence, he says that they "n'ont pour but, en imprimant leurs affreux systèmes, que d'étendre au-delà de leur vie la somme de leurs crimes ; ils n'en peuvent plus faire, mais leurs maudits écrits en feront commettre."<sup>55</sup> Despite his tongue-in-cheek chastisement of these wicked writers, his real concern is with those who don't go far

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<sup>54</sup> Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Editions Pauvert, 1986), 31.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

enough. He lays the blame for man's misunderstanding of his own nature at the feet of those who should enlighten the public, citing "la stupide retenue de ceux qui voulurent écrire sur ces matières. Enchaînés par d'absurdes craintes, ils ne nous parlent que de puérités connues de tous les sots, et n'osent, portant une main hardie dans le cœur humain, en offrir à nos yeux les gigantesques égarements."<sup>56</sup> In his *Idée sur les romans*, Sade tells us that good novelists obsessively tell the truth, because they follow Nature's inclinations: "Le romancier est l'homme de la nature, elle l'a créé pour être son peintre."<sup>57</sup> As artists, writers must fulfill their mission to depict man in his natural state, not with false moral embellishments.

## 2.2 MARQUIS DE SADE

Critics have long tried to explain and define Sade's role in writing the Revolution. According to Georges Bataille and Simone de Beauvoir, Sade's violence is rationalized, most likely stemming from the complexities of Sade's own life. Bataille sees Sade as a frustrated nobleman, who lashed out at the Ancien Régime through his writings. For him, Sade's criticism of the past was based on two lines of attack: "in the one he sided with the Revolution and criticized the monarchy, but in the other he exploited the infinite possibilities of literature and propounded to his readers the concept of a sovereign type of humanity whose privileges would not have to be agreed upon by the masses."<sup>58</sup> It is this negation of the right of the masses that would be at the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>57</sup> Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *Idée sur les romans* in *Œuvres complètes du Marquis de Sade*, tome 10 (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1997), 16.

<sup>58</sup> Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd., 1987), 166.

heart of so many of Sade's fictional works, contrary to the Republican ideals he would espouse in his public life.

For Simone de Beauvoir, Sadien violence was a sort of parody. According to her, when confronted with the events surrounding the Revolution and its subsequent Terror, Sade did not attempt to create a utopian escape; rather, she notes that “il n’essaie pas d’instituer un univers neuf: il se borne à tourner en derision par la manière don’t il l’imite celui qui lui est impose.”<sup>59</sup> The only escape Sade offers is to be found in his libertine world of power and sexual fantasies. Beauvoir sees the libertine movement among young aristocrats as an attempt to recapture the power that should have been theirs: “Scions of a declining class which had once possessed concrete power, but which no longer retained any real hold on the world, they tried to revive symbolically, in the privacy of the bedchamber, the status for which they were nostalgic: that of the lone and sovereign despot.”<sup>60</sup> It is this illusion of power that Sade is trying to recover, even though the status he seeks will never be restored to him.

While Bataille's criticism is certainly supported by a careful reading of Sade's frequently contradictory correspondence, the marquis' rebellion would likely have occurred under any authoritative régime. Indeed, he continued to be punished by each subsequent government until the end of his life. Sade's 'sense of entitlement' would never allow him simply to exist in any sort of group dynamic. Beauvoir's observation that Sade heavily used parody to make his point is easily seen in his novels. However, it can be argued that he did, indeed, attempt to establish literary blueprints for new utopian (i.e. libertine) spaces. Many critics focus so extensively on the reputation of the “Divine Marquis” that they frequently overlook the most powerful

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<sup>59</sup> Simone de Beauvoir “Faut-il brûler Sade?,” *Les Temps Modernes* 75 (janvier, 1952): 1200.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

testimony of what he was trying to accomplish. Sade's works themselves contain clear indications of their author's purpose and they demand renewed close textual study.

Another prominent critic of Sade, Maurice Blanchot, devotes much effort to comparing Sadien ideas and terminologies to those of the Revolutionaries. Blanchot observes how reasoned Sade's writing tends to be: his style is encyclopedic, with its lists and descriptions of sexual positions and implements; the didactic nature of many of his works serves as a primer for future libertines; and Sade frequently uses a syllogistic style to draw his readers into his beliefs. This enlightenment style of writing then turns current political and moral doctrines on their heads. Sade advocated communal homes, in order to facilitate debauchery; children were to be removed from their families, so that they could be freed from old-fashion prejudices; true fraternity would necessarily lead to incest, as the natural expression of man's fondness for his fellows. The ideals of freedom were espoused by Revolutionary philosophers, but their goal, of course, was to promote national unity and the education and formation of good *citoyens*, rather than Sade's desired goal of creating decadent libertines. Blanchot's careful study of Sadien discourse provides valuable tools for the study of a frequently sarcastic and contradictory author.

In addition to Blanchot, Caroline Weber offers invaluable insight into Sade's use of Revolutionary rhetoric. Her *Terror and Its Discontents: Suspect Words in Revolutionary France* focuses extensively on Sade's Revolutionary writings and speeches, frequently drawing parallels between his language and that of contemporary politicians. Weber eloquently illustrates how Sade responded to the new Republic's contradictory actions and broken promises by comparing the libertine's works to Revolutionary staples such as *The Social Contract* and Robespierre's "Fête de l'Être Suprême." Rousseau's duality of man and citizen serves as the basis for many of Sade's arguments for a lessening of legal restrictions, while the idea of a Supreme Being is



dismissed as false idolatry that limits citizens' minds and bodies.<sup>61</sup> Along with Sade's various literary strategies, Weber is also careful to remind us that there is an "almost constant vacillation between Terrorist collusion and anti-Terrorist critique"<sup>62</sup> in his postrevolutionary output that must be taken into account. Through the clarifying lens of this sort of in-depth analysis, Sade's political theories and objectives become perceptible, despite the author's frequent attempts to hide his message behind sarcasm and political distortions.

### 2.2.1 Sade and Revolution

Donatien Alphonse François de Sade has the distinction of being prosecuted by the Ancien Régime, the Committee for Public Safety, and the First Empire. He served a total of twenty-seven years in prison and mental institutions over the course of his life. These imprisonments were the results of various problems, ranging from *lettres de cachet* orchestrated by his mother-in-law to charges of poisoning prostitutes. Regardless of his actual guilt, Sade saw himself as the perpetual victim in all of his misadventures. The epitaph he wrote for himself reveals his self-pity:

*Épitaphe de D.-A.-F. Sade,  
détenu sous tous les régimes.*

Le despotisme au front hideux  
En tous les temps lui fit la guerre ;  
Sous les rois, ce monstre odieux  
S'empara de sa vie entière.  
Sous la Terreur, il se maintient  
Et met Sade au bord de l'abîme.  
Sous le Consulat il revient

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<sup>61</sup> Caroline Weber, *Terror and Its Discontents: Suspect Words in Revolutionary France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 184-185.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Sade en est encore la victime.<sup>63</sup>

This epitaph was not actually used to mark Sade's grave. He was, instead, buried in the cemetery at the Charenton asylum where he had spent his last years. The gravestone bore no name, but did have a cross to mark the site, something added by the asylum personnel, not at Sade's request.<sup>64</sup>

Sade's early years were spent in the Prince de Condé's household, as his mother was related to the Prince and served as a lady-in-waiting to the Princesse. This privileged childhood came to an abrupt end when, at the age of four, Sade got into a physical altercation with the young Prince, resulting in his exile to Languedoc to be raised by his grandmother.<sup>65</sup> Sade continued to receive the sort of education appropriate to his background, but he was no longer allowed in the hallowed halls of the royal family's households. Being cast out from the society into which he had been born, essentially exiled from his parents' lives, and ostracized at school all contributed to Sade's disdain for those in power. He would spend his entire life taunting authority for its failures and provoking it into action, seemingly oblivious to the fact that the response would typically be a backlash against him. Georges Bataille observes that Sade first tried to use the "privileges conferred on him by a feudal régime to further his own passions. But the régime was by that time tempered sufficiently with reason [...] to oppose the potential abuse of these privileges by a great lord."<sup>66</sup> As was typical for Sade, his attempts to appropriate power would come too late and under the wrong circumstances.

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<sup>63</sup> Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *Œuvres complètes* tome II, ed. Gilbert Lely (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1966), 24-25.

<sup>64</sup> Neil Schaeffer, *The Marquis de Sade: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 514-515.

<sup>65</sup> For further details about Sade's early life, see Gilbert Lely's *La Vie du Marquis de Sade* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952) and Neil Schaeffer's *The Marquis de Sade: A Life*.

<sup>66</sup> Bataille, *Eroticism*, 166.

The French Revolution would prove to be a powerful moment in Sade's life, although it would not perhaps have the overwhelming impact for which he had hoped. Sade had faced oppression and attacks on his personal liberty from a very young age and had high expectations for the Revolution. After listing many of his grievances against the Ancien Régime (and, more specifically, his in-laws), Sade writes to his attorney, Reinaud:

À ce propos, n'allez pourtant pas me prendre pour un enragé. Je vous proteste que je ne suis qu'impartial, fâché de perdre beaucoup, plus fâché encore de voir mon souverain dans les fers [...] mais regrettant fort peu, d'ailleurs, l'ancien régime. Assurément, il m'a rendu trop malheureux pour que je le pleure.<sup>67</sup>

Persecuted for years for his pursuit of personal happiness, Sade truly believed that the fall of the Ancien Régime could signify the beginning of a new era of individual liberty. Issues he had struggled with his entire life, such as personal liberty, abuse of power, and freedom of speech now took center stage in newspapers and political speeches. He felt that the new régime could not help but redress the wrongs committed by the monarchy and sanction ever-increasing freedoms for its people.

Most critics view the link between Sade and the Revolution as a stable, if somewhat adversarial bond. As mentioned earlier, Caroline Weber and Maurice Blanchot are among just a few of the critics to study in-depth the antagonistic effect of Revolutionary politics on Sade's thoughts and literary production. In reality, the events of the Revolution and subsequent Terror had a profound effect on the man and his writings. In the beginning, Sade militated for and encouraged the Revolution as a means to fulfill his lifelong desire for personal liberty, free from societal judgments. For him, the Revolution was a moment apart, a chance for true freedom in the interregnum of two régimes. Maurice Blanchot describes this moment for Sade as:

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<sup>67</sup> Sade letter to Reinaud, 22 May 1790. Cited in Alice M. Laborde *Correspondances du Marquis de Sade et de ses proches enrichies de documents, notes et commentaires*, vol XXI (Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1996), 226.

le temps pur où l'histoire suspendue fait époque, ce temps de l'entre-temps où entre anciennes lois et les lois nouvelles règne le silence de l'absence des lois, cet intervalle qui correspond précisément à l'entre-dire où tout cesse et tout s'arrête, y compris l'éternelle pulsion parlante, parce qu'il n'est plus alors d'interdit.<sup>68</sup>

Sade's overwhelming desire for this "empty" space, free of laws and interdictions, can be seen in his works; it is this absolute freedom he advocated in his espousal of the Revolution. Hidden within his enthusiastic support, however, was the need to preserve his own position as a member of the nobility and lord of the manor to all those who worked for him. Responding to a 1791 request to build fortifications on his property at La Coste, Sade expresses his disdain for the authorities who would require the marquis to contribute to the national defense with his own goods:

[Les représentants du gouvernement] peuvent être sûrs que ni moi ni ma race n'aurons envie d'aller habiter un pays qui s'est aussi affreusement flétri et déshonoré que celui-là. Nous irons pour nos affaires visiter nos biens, nos fermes, mais respirer le même air que de tels brigands ! oh ! ma foi, jamais, jamais ! Je les déteste à présent autant que j'ai pu les aimer et les regarde comme des imbéciles qui, pouvant s'enrichir de la révolution française, ont été assez bêtes pour s'y écraser.<sup>69</sup>

Sade continued to separate himself and his "race" from the common revolutionary rabble, displaying yet again his inability to truly understand the Revolutionary concept of equality. He sees the ruling class, of which he is patently a member, as completely necessary to the continued survival of the country. The local authorities, or "brigands," who are trying to order Sade to contribute to the local defense are seen as one of the reasons the country is now dishonored and in decline. This aversion to contributing to the collective good would mark all of Sade's interactions with his tenants and those who worked for him.

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<sup>68</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *L'Inconvenance majeure*, in Marquis de Sade, *Français, encore un effort* (Paris: Pauvert, 1965), 39.

<sup>69</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 9 juillet 1791. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXII, 60.

As can be seen from the above example, Sade's concepts often collided with accepted Revolutionary ideals and language. Whether he intended them as a parody of Revolutionary values or not, Sade's interpretations of contemporary ideas served to mock the political discourse of the time. Liberté, égalité, fraternité was the main motto of the Revolution. The Marquis de Sade was also a forceful proponent of liberty, but its meaning for him was very different. Sadien freedom is based on individual power and never on the group. Maurice Blanchot defines Sadien equality as the right to equally use others, while freedom is the power to bend others to your will.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, Revolutionary freedom could only be achieved through connections of equality and fraternity between fellow citizens. For Sade, it is only through the power one holds, and how it is yielded, that individuals will succeed. The only way to rise above threats to sovereignty is to acquire yet more power. Sadien power is based in negation – of God, of societal laws, and, eventually, of Nature.<sup>71</sup>

Only a select and highly limited group of elites is permitted to enjoy true freedom in Sade's novels. This group is not restricted to those born to the nobility, but libertines are typically from the ruling class. One of his strongest female characters, Juliette (*Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice*, 1796), was an orphan adopted by a libertine because he recognized her capacity for licentiousness, which earned her a place as a powerful libertine in her own right. In contrast, the fact that her sister does not share these wicked propensities will condemn Justine (*Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu*, 1791) to an unhappy life and miserable end.

Although Sade may have thought he was writing about Revolutionary themes, his lack of consideration for the common good sets him apart. The Revolution was devoted to the betterment of the nation of Frenchmen, with equality and liberty guaranteed to all citizens, as

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<sup>70</sup> Maurice Blanchot. *Lautréamont et Sade* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949), 222.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 255. Also see the discussion below about Sade and Nature.

long as these rights did not interfere with the general good. Any attempts to limit the nation's ability to grow as a republic or to protect itself were dealt with instantly and brutally. The Law of 22 Prairial established a Revolutionary Tribunal to punish "the enemies of the people," defined as "those who have instigated the re-establishment of the monarchy, or have sought to disparage or dissolve the National Convention and the revolutionary and republican government of which it is the center," among others. The penalty for all offenses mentioned in the law is death, with convictions based on minimal evidence and denunciations by fellow citizens.<sup>72</sup>

The Marquis de Sade's (mis)understanding of key Revolutionary concepts would cause him continuous problems throughout the late eighteenth century. Concerned first and foremost with his own image and self-preservation, Sade would shift his beliefs depending on the person he was addressing and the current state of his financial situation. Despite his claims to be working for the nation's advancement, there is little reason to believe anything but self-interest motivated his actions. As Simone de Beauvoir points out, "Il est républicain, et théoriquement il réclame même un socialisme intégral et l'abolition de la propriété: mais il tient à conserver son château et ses terres."<sup>73</sup> Adapting to the continuously changing tides, Sade nevertheless always tried to protect himself first and foremost.

Sade's frustration with the endless decrees and laws handed down during the Terror, in particular, shine through in the pamphlet found in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. His belief that individuals should not all be subject to the same uniform laws is made quite clear in his diatribe against those who would impose such decrees:

Je conviens que l'on ne peut pas faire autant de lois qu'il y a d'hommes ; mais les lois peuvent être si douces, en si petit nombre, que tous les hommes, de quelque caractère qu'ils soient, puissent facilement s'y plier. Encore exigerais-je que ce petit nombre de lois

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<sup>72</sup> See Stewart, 528-531.

<sup>73</sup> Simone de Beauvoir "Faut-il brûler Sade?," *Les Temps Modernes* 74 (décembre, 1951): 1015.

fût d'espèce à pouvoir s'adapter facilement à tous les différents caractères ; l'esprit de celui qui les dirigerait serait de frapper plus ou moins, en raison de l'individu qu'il faudrait atteindre. Il est démontré qu'il y a telle vertu dont la pratique est impossible à certains hommes, comme il y a tel remède qui ne saurait convenir à tel tempérament. Or, quel sera le comble de votre injustice si vous frappez de la loi celui auquel il est impossible de se plier à la loi !<sup>74</sup>

Man's individual spirit was being crushed under the weight of the government's unceasing attempts to regulate his very existence. It is unnatural to think that manmade laws could be universally applied to mankind as a group. For Sade, the situation was identical to that of life under the Ancien Régime. He believed that some men are just not capable of obeying certain laws, and it is an invasion of their liberty to apply the same laws to all members of society.

Notwithstanding the Sadien concept of libertine despotism, the Marquis de Sade detested being at the mercy of those more powerful than himself. Sade's vision of himself as a martyr and as the brunt of despotism's caprices shines through in every line of the funerary epitaph cited above. He saw himself as an eternal victim of a system designed to punish anyone who was different from the norm. He also believed that his efforts, at worst, had an indifferent impact on society, as in the case of his dealings with prostitutes or in the expression of his sexual choices. Seen in a more positive light, his actions may even help the nation. In one of his last imprisonments under the Ancien Régime, Sade set himself up as one of the catalysts for the storming of the Bastille. He recalled the incident in a letter to his solicitor Gaufridy:

Le deux juillet, à l'occasion d'un peu de train que je fis à la Bastille pour des mécontentements que l'on m'y donnait, le gouverneur se plaignit au ministre. J'échauffais, disait-on, par ma fenêtre l'esprit du peuple, je l'assemblais sous cette fenêtre, je l'avertissais des préparatifs qui se faisaient à la Bastille, je l'exhortais à venir jeter bas ce monument d'horreur... Tout cela était vrai.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert, 1986), 505.

<sup>75</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, fin mai 1790. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXI, 229.

Throughout the rest of his life, Sade continued to proclaim himself one of the main agents that brought about the fall of this hated symbol of monarchical injustice. He pulled out the incident several times to create political currency and to prove his loyalty to the Revolution. In a letter dated December 1793, in order to justify himself as a true supporter of the Revolution, he states: “Dix ans victime du despotisme ministériel, j’étais encore à la Bastille le trois juillet 1789. J’y popularisais la garnison ; j’y dévoilais aux habitants de Paris les atrocités qui se préparaient contre eux dans ce château.”<sup>76</sup> This letter is only one example of many in which he calls up his Revolutionary roots in order to save himself from the Terror’s machinery.

After his release from prison in 1790, thanks to the abolition of *lettres de cachet*, the Marquis de Sade became heavily involved in the Section des Piques, one of the most radical sections in Paris. Sade took up residency there in order to stay more connected to events and because its very radicalism made it easy for men to rise quickly to prominence. While living in the Vendôme neighborhood, Sade would become a hospital administrator and, eventually, president of the section. Of course, Sade could not resist gloating about the reversal of fortune that saw him (albeit temporarily) in a position of power. In a letter dated 13 April 1793, Sade crows about his appointment as a judge:

Je suis juge, oui, juge ! ... Juré d’accusation ! Qui vous eût dit cela il y a quinze ans ? [...] Vous voyez bien que ma tête se mûrit et que je commence à devenir sage ... Mais félicitez-moi donc et surtout ne manquez pas d’envoyer de l’argent à Monsieur le juge ou, le diable m’emporte, sans cela, si je ne vous condamne à mort ! Répandez un peu cela dans le pays pour qu’enfin ils me connaissent pour bon patriote, car je vous jure en vérité que je le suis de cœur et d’âme.<sup>77</sup>

As is typical for Sade, this brief passage shows three of his major concerns at once. He has finally achieved the power he so longed for and sees it as a sign of his newfound majority.

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<sup>76</sup> Sade letter to Législateurs de la convention, début décembre 1793. Cited in Laborde *Correspondances*, 127.

<sup>77</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 13 avril 1793. Cited in Laborde’s *Correspondances*, vol XXIII, 58.



However, he instantly interrupts himself to remind his solicitor that he requires more money, going so far as to jokingly threaten Gaufridy with the death penalty if he does not receive the funds.<sup>78</sup> After this ever-present plea, he then appeals to his friend to spread the word of his “patriotic” post to those in the countryside, in an attempt to embellish his reputation as a good Republican.

Well-established as a licentious author, the Marquis de Sade sought to carve out a new place for himself in Revolutionary Paris. He continued to write his plays and novels, although the plays were, as always, poorly received. The novels were published clandestinely and circulated widely throughout France. Throwing himself into politics in the capital, Citoyen Sade would try to downplay his debauched past and focus attention on his patriotic efforts.

Becoming involved in the Section des Piques, Sade quickly rose to prominence with popular speeches, including a well-received eulogy for Marat and Le Peletier, two martyrs of the Revolution. With the sound of the guillotine operating in the background, Sade delivered his fervently republican speech:

Sublimes martyrs de la liberté, déjà placés au temple de Mémoire, c’est de là que, toujours révéérés des humains, vous planerez au-dessus d’eux, comme les astres bienfaisants qui les éclairent, et qu’également utiles aux hommes, s’ils trouvent dans les uns la source de tous les trésors de la vie, ils auront aussi dans les autres l’heureux modèle de toutes les vertus.<sup>79</sup>

Sade was undoubtedly a bit tongue-in-cheek with this tribute to men who were responsible for intense violence and suffering, but his praise played to the Revolutionary crowd. Although he detested societal concepts of virtue, it was one of the key terms bandied about by politicians on a daily basis, and as such, a necessary component in a eulogy for the Revolution’s latest “martyrs.”

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<sup>78</sup> See the discussion later in this chapter of Sade’s feelings toward the death penalty.

<sup>79</sup> Maurice Lever, *Donatien Alphonse François, marquis de Sade* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1991), 506.

Sade's speech was very well received and helped to establish him as a true patriot for the time being.

Unfortunately for Sade, his need for money meant that he could not devote himself exclusively to politics. Of course, his desire to become involved in politics was tinged with his own self-centered interests. He struggled tremendously with the ever-changing currents of the day. In response to a request from his solicitor, Sade tried to define his own philosophy for dealing with the political turmoil:

D'abord, en qualité d'homme de lettres, l'obligation où je suis ici journellement de travailler tantôt pour un parti, tantôt en faveur de l'autre, établit une mobilité dans mes avis dont se ressent ma manière intérieure de penser. Veux-je la sonder réellement ? Elle ne se trouve vraiment pour aucun des partis et est un composé de tous. Je suis anti-jacobite, je les hais à la mort ; j'adore le roi, mais je déteste les anciens abus ; j'aime une infinité d'articles de la constitution, d'autres me révoltent ; je veux qu'on rende à la noblesse son lustre, parce que de le lui avoir ôté n'avance à rien [...]. Voilà ma profession de foi. Que suis-je à présent ? Aristocrate ou démocrate ? Vous me le direz s'il vous plaît avocat, car pour moi je n'en sais rien.<sup>80</sup>

The confusion he felt is clearly seen in this attempt to define his own strategy for surviving the chaos the Revolution engendered. Later statements would see him professing more radical views and declaiming against the monarchy, but in the beginning, Sade still felt safe enough supporting the king and criticizing his opponents. He did not see a conflict between his desire to retain his noble status and his hatred of the Ancien Régime's abuses.

Although he would become heavily involved in politics, Sade would always consider himself a writer, first and foremost. As can be seen in the above quote, he felt that his art obligated him to work for multiple forces, either through the need to represent contemporary events or to preserve his own skin. Politics could not only earn him prestige, it might be able to save him. In fact, his political roles did serve him well for a time until the Revolution turned

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<sup>80</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 5 December 1791. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXII, 90.

back on him. Sade felt that his *noblesse oblige* background required him to continue as an aristocrat and landowner, fulfilling some of his responsibilities, but also meriting the respect due his station.

### 2.2.2 Terror and Domination in Sade

Fear is a powerful weapon in procuring libertine pleasure, but it is a weapon that can only be wielded by a select few. The terror that is instilled in Sadien victims serves primarily to create docile bodies, which further enhances the pleasure of those in power. None of Sade's heroes ever show fear, but if they do, they are immediately berated by their comrades. Toward the end of *Philosophie*, the Chevalier expresses concern over Dolmancé's plans for Eugénie's mother and is immediately taken to task for his weak-heartedness:

Chevalier: En vérité, Dolmancé, ce que vous nous faites faire est horrible ; c'est outrager à la fois la nature, le ciel et les plus saintes lois de l'humanité.

Dolmancé: Rien ne me divertit comme les solides élans de la vertu du chevalier. [...] Mon ami, c'est de la nature que les roués tiennent les principes qu'ils mettent en action. [...] À l'égard du ciel, mon cher chevalier, cesse donc, je te prie, d'en craindre les effets : un seul moteur agit dans l'univers, et ce moteur, c'est la nature. [...] Les lois de l'humanité, ajoute-t-il, sont violées par les fadaïses que nous nous permettons ! Retiens donc une fois pour toutes, homme simple et pusillanime, que ce que les sots appellent l'humanité n'est qu'une faiblesse née de la crainte et de l'égoïsme ; que cette chimérique vertu, n'enchaînant que les hommes faibles, est inconnue de ceux dont le stoïcisme, le courage et la philosophie forment le caractère. Agis donc, chevalier, agis donc sans rien craindre !<sup>81</sup>

The derision Sade feels for those who would try to avoid extreme libertinage comes through strongly in his *porte-parole*'s speech. Only weak, superstitious men would deny their true natures and seek to blame man-made laws for their lack of courage.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 555.

Concurrent with the idea of generating fear in their victims is the need for the libertines to dominate their situations and their surroundings. Power may not be shared in the libertine world. If the victims are given even the slightest control over their condition, they take away some of their persecutors' enjoyment. This philosophy is no doubt tied to the very origin of the word "libertine," which comes from the Latin *libertinus*, designating the class of freed slaves who have not yet become Roman citizens.<sup>82</sup> Power and freedom that have been so painstakingly earned are privileges to be cherished and protected from any who would try to take them away.

According to Sadien libertinism, once pleasure is shared, it is necessarily diminished for the individual. Dolmancé, Sade's alter-ego in *Philosophie*, compares a libertine seeking pleasure to a despot; both men are concerned only with their own pleasure. For Sade, despotism was a natural condition in man, not solely limited to political activities.

Il n'est point d'homme qui ne veuille être despote quand il bande : il semble qu'il a moins de plaisir si les autres paraissent en prendre autant que lui. Par un mouvement d'orgueil bien naturel en ce moment, il voudrait être le seul au monde qui fût susceptible d'éprouver ce qu'il sent ; l'idée de voir un autre jouir comme lui le ramène à une sorte d'égalité qui nuit aux attraites indicibles que fait éprouver le despotisme alors.<sup>83</sup>

Following this logic, the domination of one group always necessitates the subservience of another, as Nature intended. For Sade, the group in power was composed of a limited number of wealthy, influential, and socially prominent members of the upper class. Although occasional characters not of nobility are portrayed as being in power, these exceptions are still wealthy and well-connected.

Conversely, Sadien victims may come from any class. Rather than choosing socially vulnerable prey, Sade's libertines heed only their own needs and desires when selecting the objects of their attention. The children in *120 Journées de Sodome* (written 1785, published

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<sup>82</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 1982 ed., s.v. "libertinus."

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 541.

1931) come primarily from the nobility, but a few belong to wealthy merchant families. Some of the children are selected specifically as a form of vengeance for some imagined slight, but most are abducted for their physical perfection. Madame de Mistival (*Philosophie*) is married to a minor noble, but his greatest assets are his wealth and his libertine leanings. Justine (*Justine*) is a destitute orphan who will suffer mightily at the hands of every order, while her sister goes on to dominate the world in which she finds herself

### **2.2.3 *La Philosophie dans le boudoir***

The Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* was composed primarily while he was incarcerated in Picpus, although it was not published until 1795. Sade was held in various institutions at this time under the Law of Suspects, on vague charges relating to letters he had exchanged with a suspected royalist years earlier.<sup>84</sup> He was originally arrested in December 1793, and was transferred to the *maison de santé* from a series of prisons. Picpus was a relatively luxurious prison hospital, run by private investors and paid for by one of Sade's mistresses. He referred to it as "un paradis terrestre" with a beautiful garden and amiable companions,<sup>85</sup> until the arrival of the Terror within its walls just before Robespierre's fall. Sade would remain there for nearly three months, until October 1794. The main benefit of the prison was to shelter its patients from the insidious gaze of the Terror's death machine, although it did not serve as a guarantee of clemency. The calmer and healthier setting allowed Sade to focus on his writing, and the time he spent there was particularly fruitful. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*,

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<sup>84</sup> See Schaeffer, 438-451.

<sup>85</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 19 November 1794. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXIII, 232.

a didactic novel, was written simultaneously with *La Nouvelle Justine*. Both novels deal with tales of a young woman's introduction to the ways of libertinage and question societal rules. *Philosophie* begins with a young virgin, Eugénie de Mistival, who will undergo a rigorous training in the art of libertinage.

*Philosophie* is a carefully constructed layering of philosophical teachings interspersed with scenes of sexual deviancy. In addition to the alternating sexual and philosophical lessons, Sade includes a political pamphlet, serving as a further didactic tool. The young protégée will be given physical and logical instruction, developing her sexual, social, and emotional skills as befit a future libertine. Of course, *Philosophie* is not exclusively meant to tell the story of Eugénie; according to its dedication, "la mère en prescrira la lecture à sa fille," it should serve as the basis of instructing girls everywhere.<sup>86</sup>

The structure of the novel is typical of Sade's works, juxtaposing sexual scenes with philosophy, shocking images with political principles. The philosophical dialogues blur the lines between lustful bodies and thoughtful minds, seducing the reader into considering Sade's beliefs without consciously stopping to consider their validity.<sup>87</sup> The abrupt dousing of the reader's ardor with cool philosophical discussions will force him to focus on Sadien logic, all the while awaiting the next promised bout of debauchery.

Although he had always challenged authority, both in real life and in his writing, the Sade was freed by the Revolution to express himself to what he believed would be a more receptive audience. The continuous shifts in political power raised Sade's expectations for increased

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<sup>86</sup> The epigraph is obviously intended as a satirical reference to the queen and her rumored immoral behavior. "La mère en *proscrira* la lecture à sa fille" was to be found on the title page of *Fureurs utérines de Marie-Antoinette*, published in 1791. Pascal Pia, *Les Livres de l'Enfer: bibliographie critique des ouvrages érotiques dans leurs différentes éditions du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*. Tome II. (Paris: C. Coulet et A. Faure, 1978), 1044-1045.

<sup>87</sup> See Jean Goulemot, "Sadean novels and pornographic novels: narration, its objectives and its effects" *Paragraph* 23 no. 1 (March 2000): 63-75.

freedoms; indeed, he urges true Republicans to yet more immoral behaviour as a means of supporting their government. After describing the great republics of history as realms in continuous insurrection, Sade states that: “l’état *moral* d’un homme est un état de paix et de tranquillité, au lieu que son état *immoral* est un état de mouvement perpétuel qui le rapproche de l’insurrection nécessaire, dans laquelle il faut que le républicain tienne toujours le gouvernement dont il est membre.”<sup>88</sup> A Sadien Republic is not a stable state; rather, it is in constant movement, forever on guard against both internal and external threats.<sup>89</sup> This need for constant action is at odds with man’s moral state, and, therefore, traditional morality must be jettisoned in order to save the Republic. Unfortunately for Sade, his fellow Frenchmen were only able to maintain this state of insurrection for a few years. Despite his hopes for a much freer society, Sade’s reality as an author did not change much. His works continued to be published clandestinely and the Revolutionary authorities still accused him of endangering public morals.

*La Philosophie dans le boudoir* serves in many ways as a mirror of the chaotic times in which it was written. The story is based on Sade’s 1788 novella, *Eugénie de Franval*, but *Philosophie* itself was finished in 1795, with the writing process thus spanning the Revolution and subsequent Terror. Carefully explained philosophical concepts, coupled with ruthless physical indoctrination are redolent of contemporary political speeches and decrees, but the juxtaposition of sex and philosophy are quintessential Sade.

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<sup>88</sup> *Philosophie*, 510.

<sup>89</sup> Blanchot, *L’Inconvenance majeure* in Sade’s *Français, encore un effort*, 26. This theory of instability and insurrection as necessary components for a successful revolution will enjoy a long life in revolutionary theory, including the Maoist “continuous revolution.”

### 2.2.4 The Libertine as Educator

One of the primary concerns of the Revolution's new government was to educate the nation on how to become good citizens. In his *Fragments sur les institutions républicaines*, Saint-Just summed up the importance of public instruction as a means to achieve loyalty for the state: "l'enfant, le citoyen appartiennent à la patrie. L'instruction commune est nécessaire."<sup>90</sup> Teachers were to become important civil servants, responsible for the formation and education of future republicans. Carefully chosen among the older men for their wisdom, teachers would, nonetheless, be answerable to the Republic at all times, and more specifically, to the Jacobin committees that would oversee the curricula.<sup>91</sup> In order to foster the feelings of *égalité* and *fraternité*, the boys would be "nourris en commun," formed into battalions "distribués en compagnies de soixante," and lodged in the home of their instructors "à peine d'être privés du droit de citoyen pendant leur vie,"<sup>92</sup> fostering a sort of Spartan dedication to the state. Girls were to remain in their maternal homes, raised and educated by their mothers.

The 1793 Decree concerning Public Education laid out what would become the basis of the modern educational system in France, although many of the measures were not actually enacted until the Jules Ferry laws went into effect. Along with providing for free and public education, the decree also spelled out punishment for "any schoolmaster or schoolmistress who teaches in his or her school precepts or maxims contrary to republican laws and morality." Teachers were required to use "elementary books of the knowledge absolutely necessary for the training of citizens [...] the first of such books are the Rights of Man, the Constitution, and the

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<sup>90</sup> Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, *L'Esprit de la Révolution, suivi de Fragments sur les Institutions Républicaines* (Paris: Union Générale d'Édition, 1963), 158.

<sup>91</sup> Palmer, 149.

<sup>92</sup> Saint-Just, 160.



list of heroic or virtuous acts.”<sup>93</sup> All of these measures were to be undertaken as a means of educating future generations of good Republicans. Given the intense moral and physical training the boys were to undergo, it is not surprising that the state expected results: “Ce serait peut-être une sorte d’instruction propre aux Français, que des sociétés d’enfants, présidées par un magistrat qui indiquerait les sujets à traiter et dirigerait les discussions, de manière à former le sens, l’âme, l’esprit et le cœur.”<sup>94</sup>

It was of the utmost importance to have civil control over all aspects of this training. In its intensity and focus, libertine education is a perfect match for its Republican counterpart. An older, more experienced libertine takes charge of the initiate’s education. He determines what physical and philosophical matters will be covered and when the student will be deemed worthy of the title of libertine. Of course, libertine education takes place in a much smaller schoolroom, typically a hidden boudoir, rather than in a public venue, but the tenets remain very similar.

In order to achieve the goal of educating the citizenry, the young Republic often had to fall back on additional means of edification. Included among these tools were the use of terror and spectacle to win over the populace. According to such decrees as the Law of Suspects and the Law of 22 Prairial, anyone who opposed the Revolution would be swiftly and mercilessly dealt with via public punishments. In addition to the violent aspects of some of these displays, the pomp and spectacle associated primarily with Jean-Louis David and Robespierre provided the Revolution with a much needed sense of stability and grandeur.

Equally didactic in his project, the Marquis de Sade also used terror and spectacle as educational tools. One of the primary means for controlling libertine victims was the psychological torture inflicted on their minds while their bodies were used as vessels of sexual

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<sup>93</sup> Decree concerning Public Education, 19 December 1793. Cited in Stewart, 515-519.

<sup>94</sup> Saint-Just, 160.

gratification. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* does not contain many scenes of terror, since the primary goal here is to indoctrinate a young libertine, not to punish a victim or seek increasingly depraved gratification. The exception comes in the form of Eugénie's mother, who is tortured, terrorized, and punished for her unwillingness to allow her daughter the libertine life for which she is destined. The use of spectacle, however, is rampant throughout the novel. Dolmancé, as head libertine and Sade's *porte-parole*, serves as the director of the events, telling the participants what to do, frequently using terms such as "le tableau se compose" and "on s'arrange." When the time comes to punish Madame de Mistival, everyone will make suggestions until the carefully orchestrated attack is carried out.

Throughout his works, Sade extols the virtues of libertine education, involving a small group of elites who carefully select and train their new disciples. Unlike Republican teachers, libertine mentors focus their efforts on one worthy student at a time, hoping to inculcate their belief in extreme individual liberty. Great effort is put into formally educating *Philosophie's* young protégée, using Socratic and scientific methods. As Gaëtan Brulotte points out, Sadien eroticism is actually quite opposite the wild abandon one would expect to see in such licentious tales.<sup>95</sup> All of the lessons, whether physical or intellectual, are designed to push Eugénie into absolute personal freedom and committed libertinism. The lessons found in *Philosophie* are presented in the form of alternating philosophical and sexual seductions of the young novice into the ways of libertinism. According to Lynn Hunt: "Eugénie can be corrupted by the sheer force of language. Words have this power in the new order because people are discovering that society

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<sup>95</sup> Gaëtan Brulotte, Olga Gomez, and John Phillips. "Sade and Erotic Discourse" *Paragraph* March 2000 v23(1): 51-63.

is its own source of power, that society itself has an imagined base in social convention rather than in otherworldly truths.”<sup>96</sup>

The exception to the single-minded education of the libertine protégée comes during the political pamphlet inserted into the text. In a section urging his fellow citizens to overcome the prejudices and flawed logic given to them by religious instruction, Sade lays out the importance of a national education:

Français, vous frapperez les premiers coups : votre éducation nationale fera le reste ; mais travaillez promptement à cette besogne ; qu'elle devienne un de vos soins les plus importants ; qu'elle ait surtout pour base cette morale essentielle, si négligée dans l'éducation religieuse. Remplacez les sottises déifiques, dont vous fatiguez les jeunes organes de vos enfants, par d'excellents principes sociaux [...]. En leur faisant sentir au contraire la nécessité de la vertu uniquement parce que leur propre bonheur en dépend, ils seront honnêtes gens par égoïsme, et cette loi qui régit tous les hommes sera toujours la plus sûre de toutes.<sup>97</sup>

Here, the importance is placed on the formation of good citizens, who worship basic ethical goodness rather than a chimerical god. It is only through national education that the next generation will be free of religion's absurdities. Serving the state will come naturally as a result of catering to their own happiness, an obvious twist on the Republican happiness that comes from doing one's civic duty. Making children the responsibility of the state will only endear future generations to their new “mother”: “Qu'importe dans une république où tous les individus ne doivent avoir d'autre mère que la patrie, où tous ceux qui naissent sont tous enfants de la patrie ?”<sup>98</sup> Of course, the added benefit in this system is that libertines would no longer have legal responsibilities for their progeny, since they would be consigned to the care of the *patrie*, which would raise them to be worthy republicans.

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<sup>96</sup> Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 133.

<sup>97</sup> *Philosophie*, 498.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

Just as good citizens must be educated, so must good libertines. Madame de Saint-Ange schemes with Eugénie's father to enlighten and prepare her; Sade prepares a series of lessons and tests for Eugénie to pass; and only succeeding in her heinous "final exam" assures the young girl her future as a great libertine. Explaining the purpose of their gathering to her brother, Madame de Saint-Ange says:

Dolmancé et moi nous placerons dans cette jolie petite tête tous les principes du libertinage le plus effréné, nous l'embraserons de nos feux, de nos désirs[. ...] J'aurais deux plaisirs à la fois, celui de jouir moi-même de ces voluptés criminelles et celui d'en donner des leçons, d'en inspirer les goûts à l'aimable innocente que j'attire dans nos filets.<sup>99</sup>

Being typical libertines, Eugénie's instructors have already planned the gains they will receive from their tuition. Of course, the girl herself had already shown libertine propensities before her formal education began. She was carrying on a secret love affair with Mme de Saint-Ange, and her hatred for her mother was apparently (and quite naturally, from Sade's point of view) present from birth. Eugénie will merely be taught how to use Nature's tools to her own advantage, while being urged not to follow society's dictates.

As a future libertine, Eugénie will learn how to use her social status and wealth to obtain sexual power. Typically noble and wealthy, most libertines occupy exalted places within the upper classes in their public lives. The aristocratic characters in *Philosophie* display an unfettered freedom, existing in a world where societal restrictions are not allowed to determine personal beliefs and sexual practices. It is interesting to note, however, that the elitist nature of the gathering is anachronistic, given the public persona of a good Republican that Sade was at such pains to cultivate. Indeed, if the political pamphlet were withdrawn, it would be difficult to

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 387.

place the novel's setting as post-Ancien Régime, given the characters' lack of Revolutionary sensibility.

The first step in successfully indoctrinating Eugénie into libertinage is to remove her from society's repressive gaze. Many libertines have sexual proclivities that are considered abnormal (a notion that Sade rejected), and so have to hide their activities from society. When the time comes to enact their desires, most will withdraw to private, contained spaces, easily controlled and secured against outside intrusions. Anything that might interfere with their pleasures is to be restrained. Beatrice Fink describes the "pornotopias" created by libertines for their adventures.<sup>100</sup> These "pornotopias" can be physically located outside the country, as in *120 Journées* or *Juliette*, or they can be more simply country estates, as in *Philosophie*. For Sade, the idea of complete freedom was of utmost importance:

Ah, it is not readily to be imagined how much voluptuousness, lust, fierce joy are flattered by those sureties, or what is meant when one is able to say to oneself: 'I am here, I am at the world's end, withheld from every gaze, here no one can reach me, there is no creature that can come nigh where I am; no limits, hence, no barriers; I am free.'<sup>101</sup>

Whatever form they may take, they are always impenetrable locations, controlled by a small group of pleasure-seeking wealthy libertines. Eugénie will be guided by carefully selected mentors, each with their own specialties, safe within the libertine stronghold.

Although *Philosophie* is clearly intended as a *bildungsroman* for libertinage, it also unmistakably shows the failings of the current society. The mingling of sexual and intellectual educations encourages the reader to accept Sadien freedom at multiple levels. Eugénie's seemingly innocent questions furnish the libertines many opportunities to expound their theories.

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<sup>100</sup> Beatrice Fink, "The Case for a Political System in Sade," *Studies on Voltaire and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* 88 (1972): 493-512.

<sup>101</sup> Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings*, ed. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 412.

One of Sade's favorite themes was to point out man's misinterpretation of Natural Laws.<sup>102</sup> Sadien Natural Law was in direct opposition to the widely accepted Rousseauian concept of man's natural state, in which he is good, but becomes corrupted by society. For Sade, Nature's indifference to man makes a discussion of societal harm or benefit irrelevant.

Sade defines Nature in several of his works, particularly during the philosophical discourses presented to novices.<sup>103</sup> There is no philosophy inherent in Nature. It is only in Nature's materiality that Sade can free man from political, religious, and ethical concerns. As Pierre Klossowski observes, "the atheistic and materialistic speeches of some of his characters strike us as just so many moments in his thought's effort to get away from moral categories."<sup>104</sup> Nature is presented as indifferent to man, at best, since the world could easily exist without human beings. At worst, Nature seeks man's destruction, since life is a continuous cycle of death and rebirth. Because Nature is indifferent to us, we are under no obligations to obey Natural Law, which is only a manmade fiction. Nature herself offers very few laws, so one must follow one's own impulses when seeking guides for conduct.

Although his contemporaries tended to include some notion of progress in their works, Sade's belief in Nature's indifference to man meant that man could be destroyed at any moment on a whim. He took the Enlightenment motto of "Nature is good, let us follow her" and kept only the second part. Since Nature was, at best, indifferent and, at worst, malevolent to man, libertines were encouraged to do only what pleased them.

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<sup>102</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Sade and Nature, see Pierre Klossowski's "Nature as Destructive Principle" in Wainhouse and Seaver's *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings*.

<sup>103</sup> See the previously mentioned scene in *Philosophie*, in which Dolmancé berates Le Chevalier for his superstitious beliefs about the morality of Nature.

<sup>104</sup> Klossowski in Wainhouse and Seaver, 72.

Nature's indifference to man's existence, Sade argues, means that we should feel no need to obey a manmade (and consequently flawed) concept of Natural Law. The only laws a true libertine should follow are his own inclinations, which will inevitably lead to his personal happiness and fulfillment. Along with no role models for 'correct' conduct, Nature also declines to offer any examples of equality. Sade questioned that if equality cannot be found in Nature, why it must exist in man. Libertine sexual practices are never designed for mutual satisfaction; indeed, the only time others are consulted is if they are fellow libertines who share the same tastes. Individual practices vary according to personal preferences and levels of expertise.

Not surprisingly, Eugénie expresses her confusion about this new vision of Nature, so different from what conventional philosophers espouse:

Eugénie : Mais si toutes les erreurs que vous préconisez sont dans la nature, pourquoi les lois s'y opposent-elles ?

Dolmancé : Parce que les lois ne sont pas faites pour le particulier, mais pour le général, ce qui les met dans une perpétuelle contradiction avec l'intérêt, attendu que l'intérêt personnel l'est toujours avec l'intérêt général. Mais les lois, bonnes pour la société, sont très mauvaises pour l'individu qui la compose ; car, pour une fois qu'elles le protègent ou le garantissent, elles le gênent et le captivent les trois quarts de sa vie ; aussi l'homme sage et plein de mépris pour elles les tolère-t-il, comme il fait des serpents et des vipères, qui, bien qu'ils blessent ou qu'ils empoisonnent, servent pourtant quelquefois dans la médecine ; il se garantira des lois comme il fera de ces bêtes venimeuses ; il s'en mettra à l'abri par des précautions, par des mystères, toutes choses faciles à la sagesse et à la prudence. Que la fantaisie de quelques crimes vienne enflammer votre âme, Eugénie, et soyez bien certaine de les commettre en paix, entre votre amie et moi.<sup>105</sup>

The concept of laws being good for society, but bad for the individual is entirely at odds with the Revolution's belief that what benefits the nation automatically benefits the individual. A libertine will always try to circumvent any laws imposed on him, whether by God or man, neither whose authority he recognizes. The only moral compass he has to satisfy is his own leanings. His inflamed ardor cannot lead him astray; any "crimes" committed in the pursuit of

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<sup>105</sup> *Philosophie*, 482-483.

passion are acceptable within libertine circles. If other, weaker, individuals are harmed, it is their fault for not being strong enough to impose their own desires on the world.

All of the libertine characters in *Philosophie dans le boudoir* are members of the nobility, the only exceptions being that of a few servants. The novel opens with a discussion between Madame de Saint-Ange and her brother, Le Chevalier. Her brother believes that he has arrived in advance of their dinner guest, a renowned libertine, who will, despite his homosexual preferences, consent to having sex with both brother and sister. In reality, he is one of three invited guests, including the young girl Saint-Ange intends to indoctrinate both sexually and psychologically. Saint-Ange and her brother have a long-standing affair, dating from their childhood together, so he is willing to participate in her latest debauchery. She is anxious to experience the pleasures that such a notorious libertine can give her, but her main reason for hosting the country party is to introduce her latest protégée to the delights of libertinism. She lays out her plans to enlighten Eugénie:

Il s'agit d'une éducation [...] nous passerons deux jours ensemble...deux jours délicieux ; la meilleure partie de ce temps, je l'emploie à éduquer cette jeune personne. Dolmancé et moi nous placerons dans cette jolie petite tête tous les principes du libertinage le plus effréné, nous l'embrasserons de nos feux, nous l'alimenterons de notre philosophie, nous lui inspirerons nos désirs [...].<sup>106</sup>

Authorized in advance by her lover, Eugénie's father, Madame de Saint-Ange has no fear of repercussions for her 'education' of the young virgin. Although her main role will be to facilitate the indoctrination of a new libertine, Saint-Ange also hopes to learn even greater debauchery from the master libertine, Dolmancé.

Le Chevalier, the only character never identified by a proper name, serves a variety of minor roles in the novel. He has one of the largest members to be found among the nobility, but

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 387.



that of one of the invited servants is much larger. Due to his lifelong affair with his sister, he brings the element of incest to the proceedings, although Madame de Saint-Ange tells us that Eugénie's father will soon introduce her to these delights, along with Eugénie's own incestuous scenes at the end with her mother. Le Chevalier is a willing participant in either sodomy or vaginal intercourse, but says that he prefers women: "Quoi qu'on en dise, tout cela ne sont des extravagances que je ne préférerai jamais au plaisir des femmes."<sup>107</sup> Relating his first encounter with Dolmancé, he tells his sister of his intention to use something to ease his passage, something no true sodomite would ever consider: "Je me présente...je veux au moins quelques apprêts : « Gardez-vous-en bien ! me dit le marquis ; vous ôteriez la moitié des sensations que Dolmancé attend de vous ; il veut qu'on le pourfende...il veut qu'on le déchire. » – Il sera satisfait !"<sup>108</sup> It is only after the marquis' admonitions that Le Chevalier proceeds as a libertine should, with no thought to the pain of his victim. At the end of the novel, Le Chevalier is still questioning certain activities, presenting Dolmancé with yet more opportunities to demonstrate the superiority of libertine logic over those still clouded by societal doctrines.<sup>109</sup>

Dolmancé serves as the head libertine instructor, not only for Eugénie, but also for the others present. It is he who will direct the scenes and lead the discussions. After placing Eugénie in an optimal position to experience sexual gratification, he further directs her thoughts toward pleasure: "Livrez-vous, Eugénie ; abandonnez tous vos sens au plaisir ; qu'il soit le seul dieu de votre existence ; c'est à lui seul qu'une jeune fille doit tout sacrifier, et rien à ses yeux ne doit être aussi sacré que le plaisir."<sup>110</sup> In his philosophical and political discussions, it is easy to see that Dolmancé serves as Sade's *porte-parole*, extolling the concepts of individual liberty and

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>109</sup> See the discussion over what to do with Madame de Mistival, *Philosophie*, 554-556.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 401.

condemning those who go against Nature's true wishes. After having read the political pamphlet he claims to have purchased earlier that day, Eugénie suspects that Dolmancé is its author.

Eugénie, à Dolmancé : Voilà ce qui s'appelle un écrit très sage, et tellement dans vos principes, au moins sur beaucoup d'objets, que je serais tentée de vous en croire l'auteur.

Dolmancé : Il est bien certain que je pense une partie de ces réflexions, et mes discours, qui vous l'ont prouvé, donnent même à la lecture que nous venons de faire l'apparence d'une répétition...<sup>111</sup>

Although he does not admit that he is the author, whatever else he is about to say is conveniently cut off by Eugénie's next question, leading the libertines into another discussion. Despite his willingness to serve as mentor to the younger libertines, Dolmancé is well aware that not everything can be shared. In the tradition of Sade's great libertines, Dolmancé escapes at one point to an even more private setting, there to practice unspeakable debauches with one of the servants. Of course, the reason for his retreat is not to shield the innocence of his colleagues; rather, it is "une affaire d'honneur et qui doit se passer entre hommes,"<sup>112</sup> thus excluding the women present.

Eugénie de Mistival has been carefully selected as a potential libertine by the knowledgeable Madame de Saint-Ange. In order to procure the girl as a lover, Saint-Ange seduced Eugénie's father, a fellow wealthy libertine. Eugénie will prove more than worthy of the effort devoted to her, proving to be both physically and intellectually well-suited to libertine practices. Coming from the nobility, this young virgin will, in the course of one afternoon, experience the pleasures of multiple forms of sexual intercourse, incest, rape, and premeditated murder. By the time she leaves her mentors, Eugénie will be able to proclaim: "Me voilà donc à la fois incestueuse, adultère, sodomite, et tout cela pour une fille qui n'est dépucelée que

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 536.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 544.

d'aujourd'hui ! ... Que de progrès, mes amis ! ... avec quelle rapidité je parcours la route épineuse du vice ! ... Oh ! je suis une fille perdue ! ... ”<sup>113</sup> The devotion she now shows to libertine vices is impressive for a girl fresh from the schoolroom, although she has learned at the hands of the masters. Eugénie’s successful indoctrination to violence and “degenerate” behavior is parallel to her contemporaries’ acceptance of violence as a political tool. She becomes comfortable with her new lifestyle in the space of one afternoon; many anti-revolutionary writers would marvel at the fact that it seemed likewise to take the young republic a very short time to develop a taste for violence and retribution.

Of course, this rapid conversion to libertinism would never have been possible had she not previously shown propensities for the lifestyle. Upon her arrival at Madame de Saint-Ange’s home, she states that she is “venue pour m’instruire et je ne m’en irai pas que je ne sois savante.”<sup>114</sup> Before arriving at the country retreat, Eugénie does not realize just how far her education will take her, but she shows herself to be more than willing to begin the process. As Annie Le Brun observes in *Soudain un bloc d’abîme*, her body opens to pleasure as her mind opens to philosophy.<sup>115</sup> In the beginning of the story, Eugénie is only able to serve as an object of libertine desires, but by the end of her education, she is able to make informed decisions, including deciding her mother’s fate.

Le Brun further sees Eugénie de Mistival as a significant step in the evolution of Sade’s female characters. Beginning with Eugénie de Franval in 1788’s *Crimes de l’Amour*, libertine women are portrayed as females who enjoy crime, but who will repent at the end. Mlle de Mistival serves as the next stage in the evolution; she embraces her role as future libertine, but

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 554

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 391.

<sup>115</sup> Annie Le Brun, *Soudain un bloc d’abîme* (Paris: Éditions Pauvert, 1986), 262.

she is still very much a student. Juliette, from 1796's *Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice*, will represent the strongest of Sade's female characters. It is she who will finally emerge as a libertine woman, able to act on her own unique desires.<sup>116</sup>

Madame de Mistival is mentioned a few times during the novel, but always as a weak obstacle to be overcome by the libertines and as an object of Eugénie's overwhelming hatred. The character is representative of both the Ancien Régime and Sade's own mother-in-law; through her punishment, he will be able to avenge himself for the wrongs both institutions have visited on him. Eugénie's mother will make her appearance at the end of the novel, as a sort of final exam in her daughter's education. Arriving to save her offspring from the clutches of the wicked libertines, she is unaware that Eugénie has already been corrupted beyond any hope of redemption. After the political pamphlet is read, Eugénie praises her mentors' work: "Votre ouvrage est fini : ce que les sots appellent la corruption est maintenant assez établi dans moi pour ne laisser même aucun espoir de retour."<sup>117</sup> Hoping to save her innocent child from the libertines, Madame de Mistival will instead be incorporated into their debauchery.

Confronting Eugénie's rebellious behaviour, Madame de Mistival seems mystified that she no longer has any control over her: "Quoi ! ma fille me désobéira et je ne pourrai pas lui faire sentir les droits que j'ai sur elle !"<sup>118</sup> When Dolmancé immediately attacks her for imagining any rights over her daughter, Madame de Mistival cites the care she has taken with her education. Dolmancé's scathing view of traditional education leaves no doubt that this display of authority will also be denied: "Quant à l'éducation, il faut qu'elle ait été bien mauvaise, car nous sommes obligés de refondre ici tous les principes que vous lui avez inculqués ; il n'y en a

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<sup>116</sup> See Annie Le Brun, *Aller et détours* (Paris: Plon, 1989). It is important to remember, however, that Juliette, while an incredibly powerful female character, is still subject to the whims and suggestions of her male master.

<sup>117</sup> *Philosophie*, 539.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 549.

pas un seul qui tienne à son bonheur, pas un qui ne soit absurde ou chimérique.”<sup>119</sup> With the aid of her new friends, Eugénie will triumph by casting off traditional roles, while her mother will live out the remainder of her life in abject misery.

The only other characters physically present in the novel are servants, who are seen only when fulfilling a sexual need. Augustin, a simple-minded gardener is prized only for his overly large member. He is perhaps most notable for his absence during the reading of “Français, encore un effort.” Despite the subject matter of this supposedly Revolutionary text, Augustin is told: “Sors, Augustin : ceci n’est pas fait pour toi ; mais ne t’éloigne pas ; nous sonnerons dès qu’il faudra que tu reparaisse.”<sup>120</sup> The libertine belief in pleasure for a limited few is shown clearly in Sade’s portrayal of Augustin as a country bumpkin, good only for his physical labors. He can be used for sexual pleasures, but must not be encouraged to seek any power of his own. The only other servant with an active role is Lapierre, a valet infected with syphilis who will serve as the death sentence for Madame de Mistival. With extremely limited lines in the story, these men will serve only as objects of libertine desire and methods of revenge. Revolutionary discourse on equality and collective good has obviously not impacted libertine pleasures.

### **2.2.5 *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* as Political Satire**

The Marquis de Sade made a career of satirizing those in power. A leading tenet of the Terrorists was “il faut tout dire,” found in Saint-Just’s 1791 *L’esprit de la révolution et de la constitution de la France*. In context, the phrase is intended to exhort citizens to speak up in order to defeat despotic régimes:

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 489.

On méprise la vertu comme le vice, on dit aux hommes: Soyez traîtres, parjures, scélérats si vous voulez, vous n'avez point à redouter l'infamie, mais craignez le glaive et dites à vos enfants de le craindre. Il faut tout dire, les lois qui règnent par les bourreaux périssent par le sang et l'infamie, car il faut bien enfin qu'elles retombent sur quelqu'un.<sup>121</sup>

Saint-Just is berating the Ancien Régime's lack of morality, which allowed virtuous men to be despised as if they were traitors or villains. For Sade, there was no pure virtue or vice; everything depends on man's individual predilections.

The concept of "saying everything" was one Sade embraced wholeheartedly. He took this Revolutionary rallying cry and used it as the centerpiece of his later libertine masterpiece, *Juliette*. In this novel, Sade pleads for complete freedom in writing. When one of the characters states that libertines may live their lives as they see fit, but they could not dare to include the details if they were writing a novel of their adventures, Juliette decries the need for secrecy: "Pourquoi donc craindre de le publier, dit Juliette, quand la vérité même arrache les secrets de la nature, à quelque point qu'en frémissent les hommes? La philosophie doit tout dire."<sup>122</sup> Juliette's journey of discovery ends on this prosaic note, setting the tone for her future adventures and encouraging the reader to ever-greater audacity, or as Danton would have it: "de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace."<sup>123</sup>

Sade's political satire took many forms, although he was perhaps at his most lethal when he combined sexual perversions and political radicalism. The subject matter and use of a pamphlet in *Philosophie* are reminiscent of political pamphlets circulated about Marie-Antoinette and the court. In the third dialogue, Madame de Saint-Ange refers to the queen and her supposed

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<sup>121</sup> Saint-Just, 95 .

<sup>122</sup> Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Gilbert Lely, *Histoire de Juliette ou les Prospérités du vice* (Paris: Au Cercle du livre précieux, 1967), 586.

<sup>123</sup> Danton, 2 September 1792. Cited in Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from 1789 to 1815*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1853), 200.

sexual transgressions, advising Eugénie that her virginity could be faked for a future spouse, if necessary, even “eusses-tu foutu comme Antoinette.”<sup>124</sup> In the libertine context of the novel, being sexually active is certainly not something of which to be ashamed. This passing comment about the queen cannot, however, be read with any degree of admiration.

Sade’s frustration with past and current regimes is also evident in the biting sarcasm expressed by the characters. The most virulent attacks against the failed Revolution come when Le Chevalier reads the political pamphlet, *Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains*, that Dolmancé claims to have purchased earlier that day at the Palais de l’Égalité.<sup>125</sup> According to Caroline Weber, the pamphlet thus “manifests not only a rapprochement between the democratically minded rabble of the Palais de l’Égalité and the decadent elite of Saint-Ange’s boudoir, but also a confusion in the political origins and alliance of ‘republican’ doctrine itself.”<sup>126</sup> Frenchmen must continue their efforts because their ideological background is still biased toward Ancien Régime principles. The unidentified pamphleteer begins his political treatise with concerns about the current state of affairs: “Je ne le cache point, c’est avec peine que je vois la lenteur avec laquelle nous tâchons d’arriver au but; c’est avec inquiétude que je sens que nous sommes à la veille de le manquer encore une fois.”<sup>127</sup> While the identity of the pamphlet’s author is unknown, Sade’s porte-parole all but admits that he is the author, making it clear that Sade’s greatest fear is that the Revolution will fall short of its potential. The work is used as a teaching tool to educate the libertines’ young protégée in the

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<sup>124</sup> *Philosophie*, 418.

<sup>125</sup> It is interesting to note the location where the pamphlet was purchased. The Palais de l’Égalité echoes the former Palais Royal, site of gambling, prostitution, and pornographic pamphlets under the Ancien Régime. See Lynn Hunt’s *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, 133.

<sup>126</sup> Caroline Weber, 193.

<sup>127</sup> *Philosophie*, 490.

failings of the Revolution and clearly stands as Sade's scornful manifesto against a Revolution that did not go far enough.

Although the idea for the novel comes from Sade's earlier short story, *Eugénie de Franval*, the pamphlet stands out as a post-Revolution addition. The story itself offers very few clues to the time period in which it is set. The chronological setting of the libertine education is actually quite irrelevant to the storyline. It is only with the insertion of the pamphlet that the reader is able to unmistakably situate the events as taking place during the Terror. Sade's allusions to the place of its purchase, contemporary arguments against religion and monarchical despotism, and the use of terms like *citoyen* all serve to situate the pamphlet in Revolutionary times. Of course, the discourse itself leaves no doubt as to when it was written, as when Sade compares the current Revolution to Christianity's overthrow of pagan idols:

Me dira-t-on que nous ne sommes pas assez mûrs pour consolider encore notre révolution d'une manière aussi éclatante ? Ah ! mes concitoyens, le chemin que nous avons fait depuis 89 était bien autrement difficile que celui qui nous reste à faire, et nous avons biens moins à travailler l'opinion, dans ce que je vous propose, que nous ne l'avons tourmenté en tout sens depuis l'époque du renversement de la Bastille.<sup>128</sup>

In keeping with the title of his pamphlet, Sade reassures the people that the recent past has presented far more difficulties than their attainable future. In case they have doubts about their power, he provides concrete evidence of what they have already brought to fruition:

Croyons qu'un peuple assez sage, assez courageux pour conduire un monarque impudent du faite des grandeurs aux pieds de l'échafaud ; qui dans ce peu d'années sut vaincre autant de préjugés, sut briser tant de freins ridicules, le sera suffisamment pour immoler au bien de la chose, à la prospérité de la république, un fantôme bien plus illusoire encore que ne pouvait l'être celui d'un roi.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 497.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 497-498.



The “fantôme” the people are encouraged to abolish is, of course, Christianity, but the real goal of this section is to convince the people that they can accomplish whatever they wish, having already overcome so many obstacles.

Sade raises many points in the pamphlet that would be debated in the drafting of the new Constitution and other political documents of the day. As Maurice Lever notes, Sade’s goal in *Français, encore un effort* was to mock current political theories: “Il s’agit de la *reductio ad absurdum* de la théorie révolutionnaire et de la dérision la plus radicale de la philosophie jacobine. Sade en profite pour ferrailler avec ardeur contre ses deux bêtes noires : le christianisme et la peine de mort.”<sup>130</sup> The first part of the forty-six page work is devoted to religion. Sade’s calls for a civic religion to replace Christianity echo speeches made by Robespierre for a cult of reason. He points out the necessity of such a cult, as the basis for future laws:

Il nous faut un culte, et un culte fait pour le caractère d’un républicain, bien éloigné de jamais pouvoir reprendre celui de Rome. Dans un siècle où nous sommes assez convaincus que la religion doit être appuyée sur la morale, et non pas la morale sur la religion, il faut une religion qui aille aux mœurs, qui en soit comme le développement, comme la suite nécessaire, et qui puisse, en élevant l’âme, la tenir perpétuellement à la hauteur de cette liberté précieuse dont elle fait aujourd’hui son unique idole.<sup>131</sup>

The protection and adoration of liberty must serve as the ultimate goal of a civic religion. At the beginning of the pamphlet, Sade states that religion teaches us to “rendre à César ce qui appartient à César,” but he quickly notes that “nous avons détrôné César et nous ne voulons plus rien lui rendre.”<sup>132</sup> Only through continued devotion to liberty can Frenchmen can escape the dominion of Rome and the tyrants who have ruled them for centuries.

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<sup>130</sup> Maurice Lever, *Que suis-je à présent?* (Paris: Editions Bartillat, 1998), 234.

<sup>131</sup> *Philosophie*, 490.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

Robespierre also sought to replace Christianity in the hearts of his countrymen with a new, civic religion. For him, the belief would be centered on virtue rather than Sade's individual-based freedom: "The true high priest of the Supreme Being is nature; his temple the universe; his cult virtue; his festivals the joy of a great people assembled under his eyes to tighten the gentle bonds of universal fraternity, and to present him the homage of pure and feeling hearts."<sup>133</sup> For Robespierre and his cohorts, the keys to this new religion would be virtue and fraternity, ideas completely at odds with Sade's worship of personal liberty above all else.

For Sade, the former Christian "chimeras" could be eradicated through the use of a new national education: "Ayons de bonnes lois, et nous saurons passer de religion."<sup>134</sup> In place of useless dogma, the youth must be taught civic principles; rather than religious fables, they must learn their societal duties. Sade predicts that, with careful tending, Christianity could be eradicated in a very short time: "dans six mois, tout sera fini."<sup>135</sup> In its place would be a better world, geared toward the development of Republican virtues à la Sade, meaning devotion to individual freedoms above all else.

The next step in furthering the Revolution in *Français, encore un effort* is a discussion of morals. In this portion of the pamphlet, Sade continues to attack religious beliefs, but his main focus is on defending the right to what society considers abhorrent behavior. He defends the right of women to control their own bodies, up to and including abortion. He lays out a solid defense of homosexuality, citing man's natural inclinations. He wants the new freedoms accorded to Frenchmen to extend even further. For Sade, theft, incest, murder – all are open to

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<sup>133</sup> Robespierre, "Report on Religious and Moral Ideas and Republican Principles," 7 May 1794, cited in Beik, 310.

<sup>134</sup> *Philosophie*, 495.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 501.

discussion under the new regime; indeed, he espoused that as long as Nature inspired your actions, they would be legitimate:

En accordant la liberté de conscience et celle de la presse, songez, citoyens, qu'à bien peu de chose près, on doit accorder celle d'agir, et qu'excepté ce qui choque directement les bases du gouvernement, il vous reste on ne saurait moins de crimes à punir, parce que, dans le fait, il est fort peu d'actions criminelles dans une société dont la liberté et l'égalité font les bases, et qu'à bien peser et bien examiner les choses, il n'y a vraiment de criminel que ce que réproouve la loi ; car la nature, nous dictant également des vices et des vertus, en raison de notre organisation, ou plus philosophiquement encore, en raison du besoin qu'elle a de l'un ou de l'autre, ce qu'elle nous inspire deviendrait une mesure très incertaine pour régler avec précision ce qui est bien ou ce qui est mal.<sup>136</sup>

While Sade does include the caveat that an individual's actions may not harm the foundations of the government, he also makes it clear that Nature is the final adjudicator of what is acceptable behavior.

It is easy to see Sade's interpretation and appropriation of Revolutionary terms in this portion of his manifesto. His argument that laws should be limited to only those actions which might harm the foundations of the government is a way to paraphrase Article IV of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, which states: "La loi n'a le droit de défendre que les actions nuisibles à la société. Tout ce qui n'est pas défendu par la loi ne peut être empêché, et nul ne peut être contraint à faire ce qu'elle n'ordonne pas."

Sade goes on to show that fewer laws are necessary, because he believed it to be absurd to apply wholesale laws to such varied individuals as make up the French nation. The author of the pamphlet claims it would be "une absurdité palpable que de vouloir prescrire des lois universelles ; [...] c'est une injustice effrayante que d'exiger que des hommes de caractères inégaux se plient à des lois égales."<sup>137</sup> Of course, once again, Sade has turned Revolutionary

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 502.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 504.

terms on their heads. Article VI of the *Déclaration* insists on the supremacy of the populace over the rights of the individual:

La loi est l'expression de la volonté générale. [...] Elle doit être la même pour tous, soit qu'elle protège, soit qu'elle punisse. Tous les citoyens, étant égaux à ses yeux, sont également admissibles à toutes dignités, places et emplois publics, selon leur capacité et sans autre distinction que celle de leurs vertus et de leurs talents.

It is exactly this sort of group fit that Sade is railing against in his work. One law cannot possible apply to so many different men, since Nature has constituted them in such different ways. Sade exhorts his fellow citizens to see the obvious error in such thinking:

Français, vous êtes trop éclairés pour ne pas sentir qu'un nouveau gouvernement va nécessiter de nouvelles mœurs ; il est impossible que le citoyen d'un Etat libre se conduise comme l'esclave d'un roi despote ; ces différences de leurs intérêts, de leurs devoirs, de leurs relations entre eux, déterminant essentiellement une manière tout autre de se comporter dans le monde ; une foule de petites erreurs, de petits délits sociaux, considérés comme très essentiels sous le gouvernement des rois [...] vont devenir nuls ici ; d'autres forfaits, connus sous les noms de régicide ou de sacrilège, sous un gouvernement qui ne connaît plus ni rois ni religion, doivent s'anéantir de même dans un Etat républicain.<sup>138</sup>

A Republic, free from religious and legislative tyrants, must accord substantial freedoms to its people. As Lynn Hunt points out, a Sadien republic requires a version of fraternity, but no universal laws,<sup>139</sup> concepts which were irreducibly joined for the Revolution's theorists. Sade's view of Natural Law inscribes exclusion, since men must be allowed the freedom to operate outside of socially accepted boundaries.

Curiously, Sade has once again echoed contemporary politicians, this time with his call for a radical reduction in the amount of laws. In his *Fragments sur les institutions républicaines*, Saint-Just makes a case for fewer constraints, since virtue will necessarily guide the citizens' actions: "Il faut peu de lois. Là où il y en a tant, le peuple est esclave. [...] Là où l'homme

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 501-502.

<sup>139</sup> Hunt, 136.

obéit, sans qu'on le suppose bon, il n'y a ni liberté ni patrie.”<sup>140</sup> For Saint-Just, as for Sade, the key to creating a society with minimal laws lays in forming the perfect citizens. In Saint-Just's case, this means the creation of civil institutions, such as public education, common morals, and respect for elders: “Il y a trop de lois, trop peu d'institutions civiles. [...] Le despotisme se trouve dans le pouvoir unique, et ne diminue que plus il y a d'institutions.”<sup>141</sup> The more a society shares and holds in common esteem, the less likely it is to suffer from an individual's tyranny. The same is true for Sade, but for him, it is libertine values that will provide the glue to keep society together.

After the discussions of legal and moral concerns facing the nation, Sade's pamphlet then turns to more specific libertine interests. As an argument for loosening the laws concerning sexual activities, Sade warns that libertines will continue their behaviors, with or without legal blessing, and, consequently, it would just be easier to relax the laws: “Toutes les fois que vous ne donnerez pas à l'homme le moyen secret d'exhaler la dose de despotisme que la nature mit au fond de son cœur, il se rejettera pour l'exercer sur les objets qui l'entoureront, il troublera le gouvernement.”<sup>142</sup> To avoid this potentially dangerous bottling up of sexual humors, Sade recommends that the law permit those with the means to possess their own harems or to make use of professionals to ease their needs. In this way, the libertines will be appeased and the government will avoid potential rebellions.

Although he had earlier defended women's rights to control their own reproduction, Sade next reverts to the “natural” law that states that a woman inherently belongs to all men. The argument starts off as a strengthening of women's equality with men: “Jamais un acte de

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<sup>140</sup> Saint-Just, 143.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>142</sup> *Philosophie*, 512.

possession ne peut être exercé sur un être libre ; il est aussi injuste de posséder exclusivement une femme qu'il l'est de posséder des esclaves.” The line of reasoning, however, quickly degenerates into a justification of women as sexual objects. Claiming that man has the right to possess any woman he might desire, the pamphlet goes on to explain just how far a man may go in pursuit of his needs: “Il est incontestable que nous avons le droit d’établir des lois qui la contraignent de céder aux feux de celui qui la désire ; la violence même étant un des effets de ce droit, nous pouvons l’employer légalement.”<sup>143</sup> Just in case the reader may see a contradiction with his previous statements about owning a woman, Sade includes a note to justify his ideas. It is important to remember that “il ne s’agit ici que de la jouissance et non de la propriété.”<sup>144</sup> In Sade’s eyes, there is a huge difference in owning a woman and merely forcing her to do your sexual bidding.

Further justifying the need for certain activities, considered as crimes under the current regime, Sade appeals to the nation’s virility: “La fierté du républicain demande un peu de férocité ; s’il s’amollit, si son énergie se perd, il sera bientôt subjugué.”<sup>145</sup> This dire warning is fraught with Sadien sexual language. Since libertines frequently have difficulty achieving and maintaining meaningful erections, they often require “ferocious” activities to fulfill their desires. When teaching their protégés to correctly manipulate their sexual organs, they continuously urge “more energy,” as only intense stimulation will succeed. Sadien libertines are never truly subjugated, although they may occasionally choose to take a passive role.

The vulnerability of the young republic is also called into question, with the author noting that the nation will need something to support it through its trying times:

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 514.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 514n.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 529.

Une nation qui commence à se gouverner en république ne se soutiendra que par des vertus, parce que, pour arriver au plus, il faut toujours débiter par le moins. Mais une nation déjà vieille et corrompue qui, courageusement, secouera le joug de son gouvernement monarchique pour en adopter un républicain, ne se maintiendra que par beaucoup de crimes, car elle est déjà dans le crime. Et si elle voulait passer du crime à la vertu, c'est-à-dire d'un état violent à un état doux, elle tomberait dans une inertie dont sa ruine certaine serait bientôt le résultat.<sup>146</sup>

Interestingly, Sade seems to see the new republican state as “beginning in crime.” It is impossible to say whether he is referring to how the nation came into being (with the execution of the king) or to the current political executions being carried out on a daily basis. While he vehemently opposed the death penalty, he believed that the republic must allow most “crimes” in order to continue its prosperity. Once it tries to calm down and base itself on “virtues,” it will fall into an immediate decline and lose its precious energy, so necessary to all virile endeavors.

The one crime for which Sade could not forgive the new government was its extensive use of the death penalty. Although a self-proclaimed proponent of allowing murder when it suited a libertine’s needs, he nonetheless violently opposed state-sanctioned killings:

[La] loi, froide par elle-même, ne saurait être accessible aux passions qui peuvent légitimer dans l’homme la cruelle action du meurtre ; l’homme reçoit de la nature les impressions qui peuvent lui faire pardonner cette action, et la loi, au contraire, toujours en opposition à la nature et ne recevant rien d’elle, ne peut être autorisée à se permettre les mêmes écarts : n’ayant pas les mêmes motifs, il est impossible qu’elle ait les mêmes droits.<sup>147</sup>

It is in man’s nature to commit crimes, but man-made laws do not follow Nature. The State does not possess man’s capacity for passion, and, as such, cannot sit in judgment of crimes committed in the heat of the moment.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 529.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 505.

The threat of the guillotine hung over Sade too frequently for him to support its use as a part of the government's power. Sentenced to death at several points in his life,<sup>148</sup> Sade had good reason to fear the death penalty. In a 1795 letter, Sade proclaimed that “ma détention nationale, la guillotine sous les yeux, m’a fait cent fois plus de mal que ne m’en avaient jamais fait toutes les bastilles imaginables.”<sup>149</sup> A veteran of imprisonment under multiple regimes, it was the machinery of the Terror that had the power to terrify him.

### 2.2.6 Post-Revolutionary Sade

Not surprisingly, the Marquis de Sade and his licentious writings were quickly linked to the Terror's justification of violence. A contemporary of Sade, Charles de Villers, attributed a rejuvenating effect to the author of *Justine*:

On dit que lorsque Robespierre, lorsque Couthon, Saint-Just, Collot, ses ministres, étaient fatigués de meurtres et de condamnations lorsque quelques remords se faisaient sentir à ces cœurs de bronze, et qu’à la vue des nombreux arrêts qu’il leur fallait signer, la plume échappait à leurs doigts, ils allaient lire quelques pages de *Justine*, et revenaient signer.<sup>150</sup>

A writer capable of immense violence in his own stories, Sade nevertheless had no tolerance for the unending carnage associated with the Terror. In a November 1794 letter, Sade talks of the

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<sup>148</sup> Sade was sentenced to death in absentia following his conviction for poisoning a prostitute in 1772. He was also condemned to death in 1793 for anti-Revolutionary activities. Both times, it was only through personal connections and administrative errors that he was able to escape his sentence.

<sup>149</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 21 January 1795. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXIV, 25. It is interesting to note that this torturous scene was used by Sade in his fictional works. The first instance of it was in his 1785 manuscript, *Les 120 journées de Sodome*, well before his 1795 letter to Gaufridy. In this story, a judge has a man broken on the rack while his wife and daughter submit themselves to rape in a mansion overlooking the execution site, in order to save him. The next time this particular denouement is seen is in 1800's *Ernestine*, a short story in the *Crimes de l'amour* collection. However, this time the plot has a girl trying to save her beloved. The hero is guillotined, while his fiancée is raped in an apartment overlooking the bloody scene. In both cases, the judge demonstrates a horrible abuse of power, but it is not until the Terror that the guillotine becomes an instrument of torture in Sade's stories.

<sup>150</sup> Charles de Villers, *Lettre sur le roman intitulé Justine ou les malheurs de la vertu*, in *Le Spectateur du Nord*, 1797. Villers was one of the editors of this “political, literary, and moral” journal which was published from 1797-1802. Cited in Blanchot's *Inconvenance majeure* in Sade's *Français, encore un effort*, 42.



elimination of Robespierre and his cohorts as an opportunity to heal the country's recent wounds: "[La] tranquillité va renaître à jamais, la mort des scélérats a dissipé tous les nuages et le calme dont nous allons jouir va consolider toutes nos plaies."<sup>151</sup> This calm and somewhat hopeful sentiment reveals Sade's desire to see an end to the recent upheavals.

Sade's hope for tranquility and healing is perhaps at odds with the apathy touted as a cure for the country's ills in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. During a debate about the importance of listening to one's heart, the libertines are counseled against such weakness:

Encore une fois, Eugénie, que cette perfide sensibilité ne vous abuse pas ; elle n'est, soyez-en bien sûre, que la faiblesse de l'âme ; on ne pleure que parce que l'on craint, et voilà pourquoi les rois sont des tyrans. [... Les] plaisirs qui naissent de l'apathie valent bien ceux que la sensibilité vous donne ; celle-ci ne sait qu'atteindre dans un sens le cœur que l'autre chatouille et bouleverse de toutes parts.<sup>152</sup>

Sentiments are seen as a "weakness," something associated with unnecessary upheaval and tyrants. Maurice Blanchot explains Sadien apathy as a necessary trait for those who seek sovereignty. The "coldness" associated with laws is in direct relation with apathy, which is needed to balance man's passionate instincts.<sup>153</sup> This negation of any sentiment toward another "ne consiste pas seulement à ruiner les affections « parasites, » mais aussi bien à s'opposer à la spontanéité de n'importe quelle passion."<sup>154</sup> For a generation that had seen perhaps too much passion, a bit of apathy must have sounded quite soothing.

Sade's life, like that of many of his contemporaries, had come to depend on how well he could adapt to the ever-changing tide of events. By the end of the Terror, the Marquis de Sade felt an overwhelming need for calm and order. Apathy is a common trait among his great libertine characters. It allows them to proceed through life, taking what they need to be

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<sup>151</sup> Sade letter to Gaufridy, 19 November 1794. Cited in Laborde's *Correspondances*, vol XXIII, 231.

<sup>152</sup> *Philosophie*, 539.

<sup>153</sup> See the discussion of "cold laws" on p. 77.

<sup>154</sup> Blanchot, *Lautréamont et Sade*, 258-259.

momentarily satisfied, yet never permitting them to care what happens to others around them. Undoubtedly a tenet by which Sade tried to live, this indifference to the outside world was difficult to achieve in such a chaotic environment.

After the Terror, Sade's works reflect some of the changes that society had undergone. Indeed, it is not until after the Revolution that some of the era's more barbaric practices appear in Sadien stories. His earlier *120 journées de Sodome* (1785) contains limited beheadings, but the use of guillotine machinery becomes prominent in the later *Juliette* (1796) and *La nouvelle Justine* (1797). Parricide, as well, will first make repeated appearances after the Terror, with *Juliette* being the most notable example in Sade's stories. As Lucienne Frappier-Mazur notes, the obsession with the father is "contemporaneous with a certain questioning of paternal power,"<sup>155</sup> a result of the overthrow of so many father figures, including the ultimate sources of authority, the king and the Church.

In both Sade's works of fiction and his own life, escaping authority was not limited to the borders of France. His 1796 *Juliette* describes the title character's flight to Italy, which is portrayed as a world turned topsy-turvy. Here, libertinage is openly practiced and Juliette moves from being a student to establishing herself as a dominant power. *Idée sur les romans* (1800) explains the latest interest in gothic and fantastic literature as "le fruit indispensable des secousses révolutionnaires,"<sup>156</sup> although no one is truly able to capture the chaos of recent events. The idyllic setting of *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* can also be read in reaction to the violence surrounding its creation. As Neil Schaeffer observes:

The beauty, the handsomeness, the air of courtesy and the ready compliance of the participants, as well as their general cheerfulness, suggest, if not a happy fantasy of the

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<sup>155</sup> Lucienne Frappier-Mazur "A Turning Point in the Sadean Novel: The Terror" in Deepak Narang Sawhney, ed. *Must We Burn Sade?* (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 120.

<sup>156</sup> *Idée sur les romans*, 15.

ancien régime, then perhaps a happy fantasy of the Thermidorian thaw following the atrocities of the Reign of Terror.<sup>157</sup>

Sade's use of Madame de Saint-Ange's country estate as the setting for his libertine "school" does indeed evoke the lifestyle enjoyed by wealthy libertines before the Terror's brutality. The sheer fact that no hints are given as to the chronological setting of the story tells the reader that Sade is trying to situate the story outside of the violence and chaos of the external world. It is only the inserted pamphlet that provides clues for its time period.

In real life, Sade continued to live much as he had before the Terror. He was arrested under the Law of Suspects in December 1793 and was held until October 1794 in a series of prisons. Following his release, he reestablished communication with his solicitor and discovered that many of his friends and distant relatives had been killed during the most violent year of the Revolution. His finances deteriorated to the point that he had to sell his ancestral estate, La Coste, and he once again tried to make a living from his writing. Along with *Philosophie*, Sade produced *La Nouvelle Justine*, *Juliette*, *Les Crimes de l'amour*, and several other works in the years immediately following the Terror. Most of his works from this period are now unfortunately lost to posterity. Sade's clandestine publishing career would soon be exposed and he would be arrested one last time under Napoléon. He would finish the remainder of his life in the asylum of Charenton, where he had earlier spent nine months during the Revolution.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Schaeffer, 456.

<sup>158</sup> For a full discussion of Sade's last imprisonment, see Schaeffer's chapter "Charenton" in *The Marquis de Sade: A Life*.

### 2.3 LOUIS DE BRUNO

Much like the Marquis de Sade, Louis de Bruno sought to influence and edify the country during this time of incredible strife. While Sade wanted to educate future libertines and to push the Revolution to yet further action, Bruno encouraged repentance to prevent future revolutions. Both men felt that they could attract the public to their sides through their writings and set out to win over their audiences with their tales. It is not known if Bruno ever read Sade, but it is certain that he would have known of the infamous author. Sade, as a writer and a politician, represented the very ideas that Bruno found objectionable in the Revolution.

Very little is known for certain about Louis de Bruno. In order to understand Bruno's anti-revolutionary stance, it is necessary first to explore his personal background. Because no biography of the author exists, we must examine the little information he provides in his work and his connections to other well-known men. According to the title page of *Lioncel*, he was born on the banks of the Ganges, but no date is given. In a journal he wrote from 1764 to 1773, we know that he traveled to France, returning to India in 1765.<sup>159</sup> In his *Réflexions sur l'état naturel à l'homme*, found as an addendum to the novel, Bruno speaks of the lessons he wanted to impart to his son, Adrien-François, who was at the age when "l'on reçoit facilement, comme vérité, les sentences des hommes qui ont mérité la réputation dont ils jouissent."<sup>160</sup> According to a survey of eighteenth-century French families with Indian ties, Bruno was born around 1739 in

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<sup>159</sup> Louis de Bruno, *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales en 1764*. Archives du Ministère des Colonies, Paris.

<sup>160</sup> Louis de Bruno, *Réflexions sur l'état naturel à l'homme*, in *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique* (Paris: Imprimeur de Gaillourdet, 1800), 9.

Chandannagar, situated on the banks of the Ganges River in India.<sup>161</sup> He married Marie-Josèphe, niece of Jean Law de Lauriston, whose father was in India as a Major-General of French troops. The couple had two children, Adrien-François and a daughter, whose name has been lost. We know that Bruno was living in France in 1790, because he is listed as one of the men designated to act on behalf of Pondichéry during the early phases of the Revolution.<sup>162</sup>

Thanks to the memoirs of one of his comrades, we also know that Bruno was a riding master and “Introduiteur des Ambassades auprès de Monsieur,”<sup>163</sup> meaning that he served as a sort of chief of staff for Lauriston. Bruno’s son was born in 1771 in Pondichéry and left France’s service to join the Dutch army as an aide-de-camp to King Louis, quickly becoming a colonel in charge of a hussar regiment. He rose through the ranks, earning a promotion to general and governor of two Dutch provinces, before returning to France to serve under Napoléon. He died in 1861, the recipient of multiple military decorations.<sup>164</sup>

Due to the lack of biographical information about Bruno, we must necessarily turn to his friends and family to identify his milieu. Bruno was the nephew by marriage of Jean Law de Lauriston, Comte de Tancarville. Lauriston was himself the nephew of Scottish financier John Law, the founder of the Compagnie des Indes, which controlled the area where Bruno was born. The Compagnie had been present in India since the mid seventeenth-century and influenced a large portion of southern India. Serving as a French infantry commander in India, Lauriston would have come into contact with Bruno and his family, which was composed primarily of

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<sup>161</sup> Hervé Perret, “Une communauté de l’Océan Indien à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le monde d’Henry Paulin Panon Desbassayns : Tentative d’expression d’un réseau” Montpellier 5 May 2006.  
<<http://www.egodoc.revues.org/octobre2002/docs/D1014812/Sect1014912.htm>>.

<sup>162</sup> Louis de la Roque and Édouard de Barthélemy, *Catalogue des Gentilshommes en 1789 et des familles anoblies ou titrées*, Tome Second (Paris: E. Dentu, 1866), 34.

<sup>163</sup> Henry Paulin Panon et al., *Petit journal des époques pour servir à ma mémoire (1784-1786)* (Paris: Musée historique, 1991), 237.

<sup>164</sup> Lieutenant de Lassus, *Historique du 11<sup>e</sup> régiment de Hussards* (Valence: Imprimerie de Jules Céas et fils, 1890), 245.

soldiers and low-level bureaucrats. Lauriston would go on to become governor of the territory of Pondichéry, after British occupation of the region, from 1765 to 1766 and again in 1767 until 1777. From 1765 to 1816, the region went back and forth between the French and English. With the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, the area was returned to France, but the colony had lost most its former glory. The British colonies in the region flourished and eclipsed the French trading establishments.

Born in Pondichéry, one of Lauriston's sons, Jacques, would follow the family tradition of military service, serving as an aide-de-camp to Napoléon. He would then progress to general and ambassador to Russia before the fall of the Empire. With the return of the monarchy, Jacques Lauriston would devote himself loyally to Louis XVIII, earning the titles of marquis and maréchal de France.<sup>165</sup> Of an age with Louis de Bruno, there is little doubt that the boys would have been given similar military training and education. Through his marriage, Bruno became a cousin of this influential diplomat and military leader.

Bruno's friends and colleagues can also provide some insight into his milieu. He was the *compagnon d'arme* of Henry Panon and Patrick Droman.<sup>166</sup> Henry Panon, father to future governors and ministers' wives, began his career as a simple infantry officer, but was able to rise through both the military and social ranks. The Droman family was among those who constituted "Indian" society in Paris, a frequent gathering of French families who had lived or had interests in India. At these gatherings, it was possible to more easily mix civilians and military, along with those of noble and common birth; the common thread was their link to India. Much of Bruno's political knowledge would likely have been gained through these family and social gatherings.

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<sup>165</sup> Melville H. Ruvigny et al., *The Nobilities of Europe* (London: Melville and Company, 1910), 331.

<sup>166</sup> Perret, 6.

Along with his service in the military, Bruno also dabbled in literature. In addition to *Lioncel*, he served as the translator for a well-known sixteenth-century historical novel. *Histoire des guerres civiles du royaume de Grenade, traduite de l'espagnol de Ginez Perez de Hita* was published in 1795, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Although there is no way to know for certain if Bruno was in France at this time, the publication of his translation makes it likely that he would have traveled to Paris and seen firsthand at least the aftereffects of the Terror.

A little more is known about the publication of Louis de Bruno's novel, *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique*. Originally published in French in 1800, the novel was translated into English in 1803.<sup>167</sup> Sentimental tales like *Lioncel* were quite popular in England at this time, due to a large *émigré* population and a strong anti-Revolutionary sentiment. Many authors in France took advantage of the stability established under Napoléon's rule to publish works that were sympathetic to *émigrés* and slightly critical of the Revolution. The amnesty granted to *émigrés* and their families in 1802 encouraged many of those who had fled to return to France, bringing with them stories that told their own version of recent events.

Although there are no records of *Lioncel* being translated into any language other than English, the book did make its way into numerous literary reviews by the early nineteenth century. A review of new publications in *Gentleman's Magazine* states that the narrative is "void of affectation" and "contains a faithful representation of many circumstances in the French Revolution, which will always command some degree of attention."<sup>168</sup> This statement goes a long way to describing the British fascination with, and disapproval of, the recent Revolution. Already in its second English edition by 1804, the novel "conveys information in a pleasing

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<sup>167</sup> According to J.-M. Quérard's 1827 survey of French literature, the work was also published under the title *Les Deux Lioncel et Éléonore*. Source: J.-M. Quérard, *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres*, Tome premier (Paris: Firmin Didot, père et fils, 1827).

<sup>168</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle* (London), November 1804.

manner, and can in no instance offend the nicest delicacy or morality.”<sup>169</sup> The good taste attributed to the author (and his English translator) would seem to be one of the novella's main attributes, praise which would no doubt have pleased Bruno.

Since the work was rapidly published in England, several British journals reviewed the novel in 1803, all expressing favorable opinions of the novella. The *Morning Chronicle* called it an “interesting novel” and the *Star* stated much the same opinion, adding that it contained “a narrative of real and recent occurrences.”<sup>170</sup> It is not surprising that British papers would be so favorable toward an *émigré* novel that heavily criticized the recent French Revolution, the effects of which were still being felt throughout Europe. Even stronger reactions came from 1803's

*Critical Review:*

We should have given our ‘*imprimatur*’ to this artless little tale, which is said to contain events which have really happened, and which at least might have happened. The whole is highly interesting and pathetic. It affords, we believe, a faithful picture of the enormities of revolutionists, and we will add—if addition were necessary—to the detestation, which every one must feel of French principles and French practices.<sup>171</sup>

This scathingly anti-French sentiment is to be expected in a conservative British journal, but it is interesting to note that the reviewer casts some doubt about the work's veracity. The exact events mentioned in the story are of much less importance than the criticism of the recent barbarity seen in the Revolution.

Along with his familial and societal background, it is also important to consider Bruno's literary connections. Bruno's French publisher, Gaillourdet, also published *L'Aristarque français, journal universel*, a political and literary journal. The daily journal was published

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 25 March 1803. *Star* 18 March 1803. P.D. Garside, J.E. Belanger, and S.A. Ragaz “British Fiction: 1800-1829: A Database of Production, Circulation, and Reception” Cardiff University, 2004. 10 September 2006 <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/titleDetails.asp?title=1803A020>>.

<sup>171</sup> *Critical Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series 38 (August 1803), 478. Garside, Belanger, and Ragaz.



intermittently in the fall and winter of 1799, and staunchly supported monarchic principles.<sup>172</sup> Much like Louis de Bruno, little is known about this journal or its publisher. Its fifty-eight issues were authored by Voidet, one of the many political writers of the time. It appears to have been just one of the multitude of political journals that sprang up in the aftermath of the Revolution and disappeared just as quickly.

In addition to the popular sentimental tale itself, the Gaillourdet publication included a preface and reflection at the end of Bruno's *Lioncel*. In these addenda, Louis de Bruno addresses current literary tastes and their influence on society in general. Bruno prefaces his novella with a discussion of how contemporary events were impacting the literary genres. People, he complains, are only reading journals, whereas they used to read great works of literature. Poetry, history, and novels are not as interesting to the average person as these political publications, although they are typically written in a "style barbare."<sup>173</sup> In a way, it is not surprising that literary interests would give way to the more pressing need to stay up to date with current affairs. In an era when political leaders could change from morning to night, it was imperative to keep up with events on a daily basis. Time previously spent reading must now be spent merely staying one step ahead of potentially dangerous Revolutionary currents.

In face of the very real menace posed by the Revolution, people frequently felt the need to seek an escape from their everyday lives. Although, according to Bruno, while novels and poetry suffered a decline in readership, certain forms of theater became quite popular. The more gothic and fantastic theater became, the more people were attracted to it. Demons and ghosts began to haunt the stage, in the place of previous Racine heroines or Molière buffoons. Bruno

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<sup>172</sup> Y. Bataille, ed. *Bibliographie des journalistes, avec la nomenclature de tous les journaux, et les mots d'argot de ces messieurs par une société d'écrivains qui ont fait tous les métiers, et qui se sont pliés à toutes les circonstances* 3 May 2007 (Paris: Imprimerie d'Auguste Barthelemy, 1826). <<http://www.bmlisieux.com/curiosa/biogr02.htm>>.

<sup>173</sup> Bruno, iii.

laments the lack of taste this change shows, but it is hardly surprising that the public would easily identify with the horrifying stories portrayed on stage: “Les sujets les plus horribles étoient ceux qui excitoient le plus les émotions habituelles.”<sup>174</sup> The term Bruno uses to describe the audience’s response, *habituelle*, is in itself a telling indication that such reactions were by now the norm in French society. The other extreme in theater was also to be seen; absurd comedies were offered as a pallet-cleanser from both real and fictional terrors. As Bruno sees these spectacles as merely passing “de la stupeur aux convulsions du rire,”<sup>175</sup> it is obvious that they are also condemned as icons of bad taste.

Along with this new form of fear-inspiring theater, gothic novels were also becoming more prevalent. Bruno spends some time criticizing the fantastic literature that emerges after the Revolution. He sees the new literature as another form of relief from the political journals, but he is highly derisive toward the genre. Mentioning Ann Radcliffe by name, Bruno says that her success is due not to her talent, but to the “tournure d’une imagination fantastique.”<sup>176</sup> He seems willing to forgive her for her work, saying that she at least nuances her novels to provide a “passage d’une terreur réelle à des frayeurs factices.”<sup>177</sup> The need to step outside the country’s problems does not escape him, but he finds the means used to be of extremely poor taste.

Bruno next proceeds to an apology of the language to be used in his novella. He sees the current taste for platitudes, *jeux de mots*, and *mots nouveaux* as a “pas rétrograde” that “n’inspirera bientôt plus que de l’ennui.”<sup>178</sup> Bruno’s struggle against the Revolution can be seen in his struggle to preserve the French language. For him, word choice and register were political

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., viii.

choices, equating good aesthetics with a truly civilized society. While the Marquis de Sade used language to shock his reader into action, Bruno tried to calm his audience through his words. Sade sought to access and enflame passions in his quest for ever more freedom. Bruno, on the other hand, felt that reason could overcome the recent lowering of French civilization, due in part to the new 'low' language.

Louis de Bruno is quite hopeful that a return to the study of literary masters will safely see the country beyond the threat posed by this new way of speaking. The “style boursouflé, gigantesque des premières années de la Révolution” must be destroyed in order to stop the “barbarismes qui tendent à dénaturer la langue française.”<sup>179</sup> While he uses certain terms in his novella, Bruno claims it is done specifically to distinguish the less desirable elements of his story: “Je les ai sous-lignés, et je les ai placés la plupart, dans la bouche de ceux à qui seuls il appartient de s’en servir.”<sup>180</sup> It might have been his goal to use these terms primarily in dialogues between Revolutionaries, but the majority of terms are used to describe their surroundings. New political vocabulary such as *modéré*, *honnête homme*, *sans-culottes*, *patriote*, and *terroristes* is used throughout the story. While some of these terms, including *modéré* and *honnête homme*, had been in use for many years before the Revolution, they had been co-opted and perverted from their original meanings. Often, the terms are used in a mocking context, either by Revolutionaries insulting someone with Ancien Régime ideals, or by Bruno to describe the upstarts in power. The words are always italicized and serve to establish the alien nature of the new events and/or the immorality of the Revolutionaries. Bruno frequently employs them to shock the reader, using them in unexpected ways. When Oursonvilliers is accused of working against the Revolution, the president of a regional committee declares: “tu es un indigne

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., xiii.

menteur, un *modéré*, un *honnête homme*. Hola ! gendarmes ! qu'on arrête cet émigré !"<sup>181</sup> The parallel between *menteur*, *modéré*, and *honnête homme* is striking, since the list goes from morally reprehensible to admirable, although all three are seen here as anti-Revolutionary attributes.

The final point presented in the preface is Bruno's discussion of the novella as a literary form. *Nouvelle* comes from the Italian *novella*, a word used for fact-based tales of town and country life, often repeated for moral edification and amusement.<sup>182</sup> The author spends quite a bit of time distinguishing his genre from other art forms. Although he apparently produced a very limited amount of literary output, Bruno was very precise in his beliefs about the suitability of a novella for this story. According to him, novels "souffrent des épisodes liés à l'action principale" and center primarily around love intrigues and adventures. While novellas may also deal with amorous or allegorical fictions, the genre "n'admet aucun épisode ni rien qui puisse en arrêter la marche." Tending more toward realism, a novella is "un récit qu'on suppose être fait ou pouvoir se faire de mémoire,"<sup>183</sup> the ideal form for Louis de Bruno's "real-life" story. Malcolm Cook, one of the few modern critics to have worked on Bruno,<sup>184</sup> calls the novella a "fusion of the public and the private,"<sup>185</sup> a common feature for émigré novels. The moral lessons and realism associated with the genre also play into his agenda for the work. After sufficiently preparing the reader with his moral and artistic goals, Bruno is finally ready to begin the tale.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., I, 40.

<sup>182</sup> *Dizionario etimologico italiano* (1975), s.v. "novella."

<sup>183</sup> Bruno, xviii.

<sup>184</sup> Stéphanie Genand recently edited the first modern edition of Bruno's work in her *Romans de l'émigration (1797-1803)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008). The inclusion of Bruno's text in this collection should spark renewed interest in the work.

<sup>185</sup> Malcolm Cook, *Fictional France: Social Reality in the French Novel, 1775-1800* (Providence, Rhode Island: Berg Publishers, 1993), 134.

In order to fully understand Louis de Bruno's position as an *émigré* writer and monarchist, it is important to first look at the role of *émigrés* in French politics and literature. After Napoléon's coup d'état (9 November 1799), amnesty was granted in 1802 to encourage *émigrés* to return to France, bringing their wealth, but also allowing them reinstated freedoms, including the right to property and the ability to publish. Many of them returned, bringing not only their remaining goods, but their own versions of recent events.

*Émigré* writings were a popular form of literature during and immediately after the Revolution. Exiled writers fled primarily to England, where their tales of misfortune and loss were well received by sympathetic audiences. The *émigré* works were almost exclusively anti-Revolutionary, not surprising given the circumstances. Almost all emigrant writers feel the compulsion to leave behind traces of their stories, "à la fois de faire renaître le monde défunt et de le fixer pour l'éternité."<sup>186</sup> Paper and pen could perhaps provide some sort of stability in a world turned upside down. The individual stories themselves, however, took various approaches to condemning the Revolution and its actions.

The best-known writer of the genre, Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, had been publishing *émigré* works abroad since 1790, when he emigrated to London. He would remain in England for a short time, preferring to travel to other friendly courts, including that of Catherine the Great. One of the most popular works of the time was his *L'Émigré*. The four volume novel was first published in Hamburg in 1797, with a British edition released that same year. *L'Émigré* is a sentimental novel that tells the story of emigrants adapting to their new way of life. The struggles facing the lead characters are the same problems shaking Europe to its very core –

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<sup>186</sup> François Jacob and Henri Rossi, ed., *Mémorialistes de l'exil: Émigrer, écrire, survivre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 11.

destruction of a way of life, political loyalties in question, and personal relationships endangered by the violence of the time. In his work, Sénac presents an image of a world turned topsy-turvy:

[L]a tragédie à présent court les rues. Tout est vraisemblable, et tout est romanesque dans la révolution de la France; les hommes précipités du faîte de la grandeur et de la richesse, dispersés sur le globe entier, présentent l'image de gens naufragés qui se sauvent à la nage dans des îles désertes, là, chacun oubliant son ancien état est forcé de revenir à l'état de nature.<sup>187</sup>

The sense of confusion and loss is prevalent in Sénac's shipwreck / desert island metaphor. Previously powerful men are now reduced to a state of nature, in which they must save themselves or perish.

Probably the best known of the *émigré* writers, François-René de Chateaubriand also portrayed the suffering of those in exile. While the stated goal of his *Essai historique, politique et moral sur les révolutions anciennes et modernes considérées dans leurs rapports avec la Révolution Française* (1797) was to analyze the causes of the current Revolution, the book was in reality a direct attack on it. In this work, political theory was interlaced with Chateaubriand's own beliefs about the immorality of contemporary events. While criticizing the brutality of the Revolution, the work also meditates on the inconsistency of History. His subsequent stories, *Atala* (1801) and *René* (1802), were published under Napoléon's amnesty for exiles. Although there is no explicit mention of the French Revolution in the works, the stories are a strong defense of Christianity, under attack from the Revolution.

Although Germaine de Staël was a prolific writer on the subject of the French Revolution, there is some debate over whether she can be considered an *émigré*. Due to her status as a Swiss-born wife to a Swedish ambassador, de Staël was allowed far greater liberty to move around Europe than the average Parisian resident. Her *De l'Influence des passions sur le*

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<sup>187</sup> Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, *L'Émigré* in René Étiemble, ed., *Romanciers du XVIIIe siècle, textes établis, préfacés et annotés par Étiemble*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 1549.

*bonheur des individus et des nations* (1796) examines the destructive influence passions can have on a society. Love of glory, greed, vengeance, and lack of concern for others are all seen as causes for the world's unhappiness. Only the advancement of reason and charity can help to redeem the current state of affairs. Along with *De l'Influence*, de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française* and *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* look forward to Europe's potential future. If people would only stop and consider what has shaped current events, they would be better able to prevent future disasters. Although her status as an *émigré* may be in dispute, her works are very much in tune with the genre's style and message.

### **2.3.1 *Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique***

*Lioncel, ou l'Émigré, nouvelle historique* contains three major parts. The story is preceded by an *avant-propos*, in which the author explains his motives for writing the text. At the end of this introduction, we are told that the novella will relate the story of Monsieur de V..., an *émigré* recently returned to France. The narrator is given fifteen days to compile his thoughts and he begins his recital to V's family, in a country setting removed from the ongoing chaos of An III (1795), one year after the fall of Robespierre. The de Lioncel and de Pressac families of the story did indeed exist, although they are to be found primarily in the Poitou and Angoumois regions,<sup>188</sup> unlike Bruno's setting of Roussillon. Bruno will provide occasional dates, names, and events to situate the story firmly in the chaos of the Terror in Paris and the provinces, but some details, such as the real names of the lead characters or their homes will be hidden to

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<sup>188</sup> Hyacinthe de Fourmont, *L'Ouest aux croisades* Tome 3 (Nantes: V. Forest et E. Grimaud, 1867), 272.

protect them from any retribution, a typical rhetorical device of the time.<sup>189</sup> While the fictional story is centered on the main characters, the novella offers “a historical justification in the ‘real’ background”<sup>190</sup> for its important tale.

Despite his *avant-propos*’ emphatic denunciation of melodramatic writers, Bruno begins the story with a classic gothic feel: “Une nuit orageuse avait succédé à une journée terrible : les vents souffloient avec violence ; [...] le Ciel paroissoit tout en feu ; [...] la plaine [était] jonchée de cadavres [...]”<sup>191</sup> This melodramatic and violent beginning sets the tone for the sentimental *émigré* narrative to follow. The field in the opening lines turns out to be a grisly battlefield, where Frédéric Lioncel, our hero, has been left for dead. He is rescued by a loyal family servant, Francœur, who is a hussar in the French army. Believing himself to be dying, Lioncel is only concerned with sending his last thoughts to his family and his beloved Éléonore. Lioncel is put into the clothing of a French soldier, which will save his life and give him a secure identity until he can recover from his injuries. Although it is not clearly stated, Lioncel is obviously fighting with the Austrian troops against the French, and it is only the change of uniform that allows him to escape detection after the battle. Francœur entrusts Lioncel’s recovery to a close friend, Dr. Gaubiac. Between these two men, Lioncel will remain safe throughout his convalescence and his journey through France.

While Lioncel is struggling to recover and make his way home, his cousin Oursonvilliers is plotting to return to France. He is serving with the *armée des princes* and begs permission to return to his home in order to protect his property and to raise troops for the *émigré* army. In

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<sup>189</sup> It is not clear exactly when the novella was composed, but we can safely say it was in the immediate aftermath of the Terror. The storyline follows the characters through the end of the Terror, mentioning Robespierre’s fall in precise detail. The novella itself was first published in 1800, leaving only a few years in which it could have been written.

<sup>190</sup> Cook, 135.

<sup>191</sup> Bruno, 1.



reality, having heard that Lioncel is dead, he is intending to convince Éléonore to accept him as her husband. As he travels through the country on his way to Paris, we learn that not only is he intending to betray his family, he is also betraying his country. Oursonvilliers is a secret agent of the Committee of Public Safety, and takes his orders directly from Robespierre and his cohorts.

Escaping a series of traps set by his cousin, Lioncel is eventually reunited with his family and his betrothed. Éléonore has been imprisoned by Oursonvilliers and some of her family has been killed on his orders, but Lioncel is able to free her and safely bring the remaining family together. The novella ends in a confrontation between Oursonvilliers and Lioncel, in which Lioncel offers the villain his life, if he will only repent his wicked ways. Oursonvilliers refuses to even consider such a transformation and commits suicide rather than repent and become a force for good.

The story is quite simplistic in its depictions of good and evil, loyalty and betrayal, *Émigré* and Revolutionary. The Revolutionaries are portrayed as animalistic, ill-educated, credulous men who are either evil by nature, or are willing to be led by evil men. Lioncel's family and friends are loyal, pure of heart, and self-sacrificing in the face of overwhelming adversity. In his *avant-propos*, Bruno claims that the text is meant as “une satire amère du Gouvernement,”<sup>192</sup> and was not intended for printing, although this is obviously an attempt to play into the story's ‘realism.’ The author goes on to state that his aversion to publishing the work stems partially from the lack of interest in true literature: “on ne lisoit pas dans ce tems-là.”<sup>193</sup> Of course, we have no way of knowing exactly when the text was composed, but it was not published until after Napoléon's coup d'état, when *émigré* literature was becoming more popular.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., i.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., ii.

### 2.3.2 Good versus Evil in *Lioncel*.

*Lioncel* presents unambiguous characters who represent fixed concepts. Frédéric Lioncel is unquestionably the hero of the story, although the first time we meet him he is begging to be killed because he can no longer go on. While such frailty may seem out of place for a heroic character, Bruno gradually lets us know that Lioncel's only true weakness is his excessive sentimentality toward his family. Since he is a man of great feeling, he is occasionally overwhelmed by the situation in which he and his loved ones find themselves. While thinking about his recent separation from his family and the fact that he may need to kill his fellow countrymen, who had been "séduits ou forcés à s'opposer à nos efforts,"<sup>194</sup> Lioncel is suddenly overcome by an excess of emotion:

Ces pensées m'avoient réduit à un état bien extraordinaire : tous les organes de mes sens étoient totalement privés de leurs fonctions ; mon esprit dégagé des entraves de la matière, me reportoit aux lieux où j'avois reçu les derniers embrassemens de ma famille : c'étoit-là que j'existois.<sup>195</sup>

This somewhat maudlin behavior is countered by Lioncel's willingness to fight for what he believes. Following this moment of weakness and longing, he immediately recalls himself to his duty and he leaves as planned. Throughout the novel, Lioncel's sense of duty and nobility are the only things capable of overriding his intense sentiment, but they will always triumph.

During his trial on grounds of emigrating, Lioncel's calm pride is contrasted very favorably with the blood-thirsty zeal of the state prosecutor. After the prosecutor's fiery speech requiring the death penalty, Lioncel courteously addresses the tribune: "Lioncel se lève, jette un coup d'œil fier et dédaigneux sur ce Commissaire, et se tournant vers l'Assemblée, il la salue

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<sup>194</sup> Bruno, I, 179.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., I, 179-180.

respectueusement, pour la remercier de l'intérêt qu'elle prend à son sort."<sup>196</sup> This polite nobility, coupled with his attorney's impassioned plea, will gain Lioncel the audience's sympathy and his freedom.

The unquestionable villain of the novella, Oursonvilliers is first introduced as a scheming soldier, ready to betray the Comte d'Artois' army. He explains that he is willing to recruit troops for the army on his journey and requests blank commissions, which will actually be used to entrap some of his later victims. Betraying the Prince and his family, Oursonvilliers will show limited loyalty only to the Revolution and his Terrorist masters.

At a meeting of the recently purged Jacobin Club, Oursonvilliers demonstrates his "civisme bien extraordinaire," proving that he truly belongs in his milieu. "Présenté par St.-Just, avoué par Robespierre et par Couthon," he is acclaimed by the "étranges patriotes."<sup>197</sup> His discourse is full of "grands mots" and "les grandes phrases en usage."<sup>198</sup> In his preface, Bruno has already shared his disdain for the new manner of speaking, and his comments here can only be seen as a further jab at the capricious nature of the Revolutionaries and their cause.

Lioncel's most devoted servant during his travaux is Francœur, son of loyal family retainers and a French cavalry hero. Francœur's blind devotion to the aristocratic de Lioncel-Pressac family seems at odds with his loyalty to the French army. At one point, aspersions are cast on his military service and he responds with ferocious pride: "que le Jean qui m'attaque en mon honneur descende ! il verra comment je me cache, lorsqu'il faut que je me batte."<sup>199</sup> However, the ties that bind him to the de Lioncel-Pressac family are far stronger than anything he might feel for the Revolution. His altruism and belief in Lioncel's innate goodness are what

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., II, 131.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., I, 37.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., I, 10.

push him to help our hero. Whenever he is faced with the necessity of leaving his exalted friend, Francœur displays great emotional anxiety. He will do his duty to the Revolutionary army, but his heart and true loyalty lie with Lioncel. On the rare occasions when he must absent himself from the scene, Francœur will entrust his friend to Dr. Gaubiac, an army surgeon who will care for Lioncel during his recovery. Like everyone in the story, Gaubiac immediately senses Lioncel's inherent goodness and is happy to be of service to him. Both men will go out of their way to keep the recovering soldier safe, going so far as to lie to their commanding officers and to forge military documents.

Lioncel's parents died when he was quite young, but he was raised by his uncle, the Abbé de Lioncel. Not only does he serve as a father-figure for his nephew, the Abbé also represents the persecuted Church, previously quite powerful within French society. Lioncel is one of the few priests who did not abjure, thus proving his loyalty both to the monarchy and to God. Providing his nephew with both a strong moral background and modest financial security, the Abbé serves as Lioncel's father-figure and most trusted confidant. The Abbé will attempt to sacrifice himself in order to save his beloved nephew, a favor Lioncel will return upon his arrest. Both men will escape with their lives, but their willingness to sacrifice for each other stands in stark contrast to the Revolutionaries, who betray as a way of life. The Abbé de Lioncel stands as the voice of reason and spiritual serenity in a time of painful chaos. He counsels against the dangers of changing too much in a short time: "La liberté de penser a des conséquences extrêmement dangereuses,"<sup>200</sup> especially when combined with wild excesses and lack of reason, behavior associated with most of the Revolutionaries. He advises caution when dealing with the elimination of prejudices: "Il faut les livrer au tems, au progrès des lumières, et chercher plutôt à

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., I, 83.

les détourner, qu'à les attaquer de front."<sup>201</sup> Time and natural progress will take care of prejudices and society's wrongs, if we only allow things to develop at their own speed, rather than forcing them, as the Terror is doing.

The remainder of Frédéric Lioncel's family is represented by stock characters. His love interest, Éléonore, is portrayed as the sweetest and most innocent of young ladies. Her feelings for Lioncel overwhelm her, but she is incapable of acknowledging her love for him without a benediction from her family. Once she realizes that everyone approves of their relationship, her world is complete. The other members of the family play inconsequential roles in the story. Éléonore's father and uncle will be sacrificed to the Terror, thanks to Oursonvilliers' personal interest in the family. Various aunts and uncles will suffer through the events and support the lovers in their quest to be united. The additional characters seem to be present mostly to establish the familial pedigree of Lioncel and to add more pathos to the family's sufferings.

The Revolutionaries complete the list of characters portrayed in the novella. They are unfailingly depicted as scheming, bestial creatures, the majority of whom are too stupid to understand the power they have been given, let alone wield it effectively. Oursonvilliers meets with his immediate superiors, Robespierre and Saint-Just, while carrying out his undercover work for the Committee for Public Safety. He is received "à bras ouverts"<sup>202</sup> by Saint-Just, showing just how important he was to the Committee. They know that he can be trusted to carry out secret missions on their behalf. Although Oursonvilliers has limited contact with these men in the novel, Bruno leaves no doubt that they have successfully worked together in the past.

The portrayal of the lesser Revolutionaries in the story is slightly more satirical, but no less disturbing. Entering a regional Committee of Public Health, Oursonvilliers shows that he

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., I, 85.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., I, 36.

has lost all sensibility to the plight of his countrymen: “L’aspect de ce lieu terrible eût frappé tout autre qu’Oursonvilliers, mais ses yeux étoient accoutumés au spectacle effrayant que ces sortes d’assemblées présentoient. [...] Une lumière lugubre permettoit de distinguer sept figures hideuses, coëffés de bonnets rouges.”<sup>203</sup> The language used in this description is almost identical to that used to describe the de Lioncel-Pressac family crypt.<sup>204</sup> However, the darkness and the terror of the crypt are balanced by the purity of Lioncel’s family, past and present. The horrible spectacle of the committee’s meeting room is accompanied only by the cries, moans, and curses of the Terror’s victims. Such a horrible setting would have shaken anyone else, but Oursonvilliers “s’avançoit avec une fermeté peu commune”<sup>205</sup> toward the regional committee, confident in his position as Committee spy.

Once in this room, Oursonvilliers will meet with a president who distrusts his claim of loyalty, calling him an *émigré* and threatening to lock him in prison with the others. Presenting his paperwork from the Committee in Paris, Oursonvilliers orders the president to remove “les gendarmes qui ne doivent pas être instruits des secrets de l’Etat,”<sup>206</sup> much as Augustin is told to leave the boudoir while the Revolutionary pamphlet is read in Sade’s *Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Just as in Augustin’s case, Oursonvilliers hopes to keep the uneducated masses from learning his business; it is not their place to understand, only to serve.

Upon receiving Oursonvilliers’ paperwork, a darkly comical scene of Revolutionaries in action is presented. The president willingly explains that he cannot read, but his colleague Brutus will be able to decipher the information. Seeing the signatures at the bottom of the document, Brutus “est saisi de respect” and hands the paper to their secretary, Graccus. All the

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., I, 39.

<sup>204</sup> See Bruno, I, 65-71.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., I, 39.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., I, 41.

members of the committee sit down and Graccus begins to read. Bruno takes a moment to point out that committee members are so lacking in manners that they do not even invite Oursonvilliers to sit, but that he does so anyway. At the words “fraternité ou la mort,” the men rise and “chacun tire le sinistre bonnet rouge qui masque en partie sa figure,”<sup>207</sup> allowing Oursonvilliers to recognize “parmi les honorables membres de cette illustre assemblée” his snobbish shoemaker (the president) and a former valet, dismissed for theft. Given proof of his standing in the Revolutionary community, Oursonvilliers is then accorded every respect by the committee. In an effort to impress their esteemed guest, the assembly decides to make a few brief speeches of welcome. Mocking the self-important group, Bruno writes: “Le président qui n’étoit pas préparé, balbutia quelques phrases de journaux ; il fut parfaitement ridicule, généralement applaudi, et tout fut dans l’ordre.”<sup>208</sup> Bruno’s earlier critique of journal-educated men is ably illustrated in this ridiculous assembly of uneducated, self-important Revolutionaries, who are striving to ape their betters.

It is interesting to note that Bruno assigns the names of notable Roman political advocates to his Revolutionary ‘heroes.’ Brutus, the illiterate president of a regional section, may have been named after a variety of Romans, but Bruno most likely chose Marcus Junius Brutus, Caesar’s assassin. Graccus, the section’s secretary and the only one capable of reading the Committee of Public Safety’s missive, is most likely named after the Roman Gracchus family. The Gracchi were martyrs to social reform for their attempts to ease the lives of the Roman lower classes. Although Graccus is actually named for a heroic family, Bruno’s satirical use of the name still provides commentary on the Revolutionaries. As a group, they are self-important and ill-educated, leading them to adopt any name that sounds Roman or heroic. As

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., I, 43.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., I, 45.

Malcolm Cook notes, “[in *Lioncel*,] fiction and history are carefully fused.”<sup>209</sup> While the Revolutionaries did frequently co-opt Roman names and aesthetics, Bruno juxtaposes true classical style and the crowd-pleasing spectacles for which neo-classical artists like David became famous. The true history behind the names does not matter, nor would the committee members know enough to verify their information. The Revolutionaries are only playing at being heroes, and Bruno wants nothing more than to mock them.

No matter where on the political spectrum the fictional characters fall, it is their moral disposition that will “encourage the reader to adopt a particular sympathy.”<sup>210</sup> Bruno’s clear emphasis on distinguishing good and bad, loyal Frenchmen and Revolutionaries does not allow for any moral ambiguity. Lioncel and his family’s quiet goodness will always merit respect, while the Revolutionaries’ evil scheming will reap its just rewards. In confrontations between the two groups, the pure innocents will almost always emerge the winners. Attending a memorial service for Lioncel, who is presumed dead by his family, Oursonvilliers is momentarily filled with remorse for his actions in the face of religious and familial sentiments: “Il fut frappé, se sentit pénétré d’un respect involontaire ; tout son corps frissonna au souvenir de ses crimes ; ses cheveux se hérissèrent, et saisi d’horreur, l’impie Oursonvilliers se prosterna devant l’Eternel.”<sup>211</sup> This momentary weakness is quickly interrupted by Éléonore’s voice, recalling him to his present surroundings. His heart, “trop endurci dans le mal,”<sup>212</sup> recovers its normal hardness and he is able to continue as before. Although Lioncel and Oursonvilliers were raised together, they were never friends. Oursonvilliers’ jealousy and his desire to possess Lioncel’s beloved will always stand between the two men. The Revolution will provide the final

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<sup>209</sup> Cook, 138.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>211</sup> Bruno, I, 95.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., I, 96.



rift between Oursonvilliers and his family. Speaking to his cousin, Lioncel says “la Révolution me paroît avoir produit un grand changement dans votre façon de penser.”<sup>213</sup> It is doubtful that Oursonvilliers would have turned out differently in other circumstances, but the Revolution is definitely seen as a catalyst for his behavior.

### 2.3.3 Bruno and Terror

Fear is a key device for *Lioncel*'s narrator. The story frequently plays upon the apprehension and chaos of the time in which it is set. There are different levels of anxiety in the novella, depending on the situation being described. Among the causes for concern are fears for loved ones and for the future of France. In the preface, Bruno himself admits to feelings of fear and uncertainty during the Terror:

J'ai gémi sur les maux innombrables de ma Patrie ; j'ai souffert avec résignation, mais jamais je ne me suis permis d'opposer des écrits à des tempêtes, et ma bonne fortune m'a fait échapper sans atteinte, au tonnerre qui sans cesse grondoit sur ma tête, et à la foudre qui, chaque jour, tomboit à mes côtés.<sup>214</sup>

The sorrow Bruno feels for his lost country is accompanied by unease over his own situation. Although he was resigned to watching events as they unfolded, he apparently now feels safe enough to commit his concerns to paper. The stormy upheaval that had menaced his way of life was now a thing of the past.

While Bruno is quick to acknowledge the role of the Revolution in his story, he goes to great lengths to downplay any historical significance it might have. Contrary to Chateaubriand's attempt to put the Revolution in a historical context, Bruno is very clear about its lack of

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., xv.

importance for future generations. His work clearly intends to help erase the event from future accounts of French history. Since the characters of his novella are unquestionably set in Revolutionary France, he says that he was “obligé d’en parler,” but the setting was of no real consequence.<sup>215</sup> Although his descriptions are “exactement vrai,” what he is writing will appear “exagéré dans trente ou quarante ans.”<sup>216</sup> Unfortunately for Bruno, his descriptions of the time fit perfectly with the majority of Terror literature, including Gothic authors who sprang from this tradition. In order not to give the appearance of ridiculing France as a country, Bruno makes it clear that he places the blame for 1793-1794 squarely on Maximilien Robespierre, who was safely dead by the time Bruno’s text was written. The already deposed Terrorist figurehead makes an appearance as one of Bruno’s darkest secondary characters. Since he is the one to blame for France’s most tragic years, only “des partisans secrets de ce monstrueux tyran”<sup>217</sup> could blame Bruno for his comments, effectively negating any criticism that might come his way. Bruno was not alone in his condemnation of Robespierre after his fall. As R.R. Palmer points out, even former friends of the Terrorist leader were quick to disavow him, saying that “they had always been his enemies, that they had secretly opposed his hypocritical projects, or that, in their patriotic innocence, they had been his dupes.”<sup>218</sup> Of course, few, if any, of the *émigrés* had ever claimed to support the Committee, so his downfall truly was welcome news for them. Bruno’s *émigrés* certainly react favorably to Robespierre’s arrest. Upon hearing of his fall, Lioncel’s allies instantly become more relaxed, “on respira avec plus de facilité.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., xv - xvi.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>218</sup> Palmer, 362-363.

<sup>219</sup> Bruno, II, 56-57.

Nowhere is the abject fear associated with the Terror more noticeable than in Paris. The city, much admired by Bruno for its past glories, is now a dark and sinister place, filled with frightened people and animalistic Revolutionaries. The previously brilliant Parisians are now beaten down under the weight of the times: “On les voyoit parcourir les rues en silence, la tête et les yeux baissés, le visage à moitié couvert du chapeau, ou par de longs cheveux plats qui les rendoient méconnoissables.”<sup>220</sup> The lack of communication, the unwillingness to make eye contact, and the hiding behind long hair or hats all serve to underline the city’s state of perpetual fear and misery, highlighting the complete breakdown of civil society. Public squares are “inondée du sang des victimes que les tyrans fasoient égorger,”<sup>221</sup> blood which in turn intoxicates and encourages the executioners.

According to Bruno, the Parisians had become “unrecognizable,” both to outsiders and to each other. The furtive actions and camouflage adopted by the populace give the impression of prey scurrying around, attempting to escape the notice of their predators. This image is reinforced with the description of the Revolutionary zealots, roaming the streets, on the lookout for new victims. They are “semblables à des tigres, ces hommes féroces ne paroissent parcourir les rues, que pour chercher la proie qu’ils vouloeint dévorer.”<sup>222</sup> Even those who managed to escape the notice of these ferocious men were still susceptible to the suffering around them. A peaceful man would feel “déchiré par les cris, par les plaintes, par les gémissements de ses amis ou de ses voisins.” However, it was dangerous to show any feeling for one’s fellow man: “On n’osoit leur porter la moindre consolation : la compassion étoit un

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<sup>220</sup> Bruno, I, 33.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., I, 35.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., I, 34.

crime, et devenoit la preuve d'une complicité punissable."<sup>223</sup> In order to survive, a low profile was essential in such chaotic times.

Of course, fear is not limited to Paris. All of France was covered in fear, including the ancestral home of Lioncel and his family. The gothic language used to describe the family castle is a reflection of the political situation swirling around the countryside:

L'aspect de ce lieu vénérable inspire un saint respect. Le silence profond qui y règne, le lugubre appareil de ces trophées, excitent une secrète horreur et dirigent l'esprit vers ces idées philosophiques et salutaires qui font apprécier à leur juste valeur, la gloire, la puissance et toutes ces illusions mensongères auxquelles le cœur de l'homme est follement abandonné.<sup>224</sup>

It is the secret horror of the locale that pushes its visitor to philosophical thoughts of glory and power. The terror and chaos of their surroundings can push men to crazy abandon. The potentially terrifying aspect of this underground crypt is mitigated by religious and familial associations, providing the de Lioncel-Pressacs with stability and a safe haven through much of the Revolution. It is not until Oursonvilliers' perfidy that the castle will lose its sense of sanctuary.

In addition to fear, power is another prominent theme in *Lioncel*, whether the author is describing its appropriation by various characters or someone's lack of control. Oursonvilliers claims power from multiple sources: the Comte d'Artois, the Committee of Public Safety, family relations, and as a man of means. Every time he invokes his power in the novella, Oursonvilliers does so in order to do harm. His influence with the Court provides him with documents, ostensibly to recruit new troops for the *émigré* army. In reality, he will use these papers to frame his uncle for treasonous activities. With her father removed from the picture, it is his hope that Éléonore will then accept him as her husband.

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., I, 35.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., I, 69.

His relationship with the Committee of Public Safety affords Oursonvilliers protection and great latitude to move about in Jacobin-controlled France. Upon receiving news of his rival's reported demise, Oursonvilliers leaves the Prince's camp and travels across France. His entry point into the country is Strasbourg, where he is first identified as an agent for the Committee of Public Safety. Bruno presents Oursonvilliers as a clear-cut double agent, who happily serves the Terrorist government. When he is first stopped upon reentering France, Oursonvilliers reassures the local committee that he is an authorized agent, with a commission, signed by Robespierre, de Couthon, de Barrère, and de Saint-Just, four of the most visible members of the Committee. This document should have guaranteed him immediate support from the local authorities.

Unfortunately, even with the signed commission, the commander of Strasbourg does not trust Oursonvilliers' word without verification from Paris. This lack of trust between officers of the Revolution can be read in two ways. First, it stands as a stark contrast to the trust and immediate aid given to Lioncel anytime he is in need of assistance. This difference underscores the disparity between the righteous hero and the betraying villain. In another case, it can be read as a microcosm of the Revolution's turbulence. No one could be certain who was still in favor and whether anyone could be trusted from one day to the next. Indeed, the fall of Robespierre heralded an immediate change in government and Revolutionary policy.

In opposition to his negative representations of fear and Revolutionary power, Bruno provides a positive possibility for power in the story. Servants and family alike make use of any and all power at their disposal in order to save Lioncel. Within the first few pages of the novella, Francœur has used his military rank and knowledge to rescue and disguise the wounded hero. As the hussar is promoted, he always seeks ways to be more of service to his former master.

Through his friendship with Dr. Gaubiac, Francœur will be able to guarantee Lioncel safe passage and relative comfort for his journey home. The two men will take turns exerting their influence and using their connections to further Lioncel's cause.

Bruno also provides for moments of hope throughout his novella. Lioncel's uncle, the Abbé de Lioncel, encourages the family to put its faith in God, who will guide the innocent through these troubled times. Upon hearing that his nephew did not perish as they had thought, the Abbé calls for prayers of thanksgiving in the tomb of their ancestors. Éléonore is chosen as the most perfect conduit for the family's entreaties, since "la voix de l'Innocence et de la Vertu pénètre toujours jusqu'au sein de l'Eternel, et n'en est jamais repoussée."<sup>225</sup> In this case, the term *vertu* has been reclaimed from Revolutionary rhetoric to showcase its original moral judgment. Knowing that Éléonore's purity and love will be his reward is the only thing that enables Frédéric Lioncel to continue his odyssey home. Without his family and friends' goodness and strength, the hero would have fallen many times.

While it will take the country a long time to recover from recent horrible events, Bruno is able to reassure the reader of the eventual outcome. Describing the time just after Robespierre's fall, he states that "les esprits flottèrent longtems, entre la crainte et l'espérance."<sup>226</sup> However, with the knowledge afforded by a few years' distance, he immediately reminds the reader that "l'impression de terreur dont tous les esprits avoient été plus ou moins frappés, céda seul à la chute des tyrans, et on respira dans toute la France."<sup>227</sup> In Bruno's mind, the country could quickly begin healing, since the source of all its recent evils was gone.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., I, 93.

<sup>226</sup> Bruno, II, 60.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., II, 60-61.

### 2.3.4 The Re-Education of France

One of Louis de Bruno's primary motives for writing *Lioncel* was to re-educate the public after the terrible events the country had just survived. Whether it was through re-establishing good taste in literature or in encouraging repentance, Bruno felt that the country could recover its previous morality. The preface is devoted, in large part, to a lament of the current lack of taste. People had been willing to accept sub-par literature and theatre for too many years and must be brought back to the classics, with their edifying messages. Although the current generation may have become too accustomed to parroting everything they read in journals, there is still hope for future readers. The "style barbare"<sup>228</sup> of contemporary writing for the multitude must be eliminated, much as Robespierre and his cohorts were swept away. The Revolution is clearly paralleled with the barbaric styles it spawned. After dix-huit brumaire, Bruno felt "une raisonnable liberté de produire mes pensées," given that the "nouvel ordre de choses n'a rien de commun avec les horreurs qui l'ont précédé."<sup>229</sup> Napoléon's coup d'état provided some much needed security to *émigré* writers like Bruno.

Within the story itself, the religious education given to the hero by his uncle provides him with a strong sense of morality and family loyalty. At his darkest moments, Lioncel is able to find a sense of peace, knowing that he is doing what is right. When the de Lioncel-Pressacs are faced with great turmoil, they are able to unite, drawing on their faith and their family for stability. During the family's thanksgiving service for Lioncel's continued good health, Éléonore is urged to pray on behalf of the family: "O ma nièce, vous devez seule adresser tous nos vœux au Dieu de nos pères, comme vous réunissez seule aujourd'hui toute notre tendresse et

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<sup>228</sup> Bruno, I, iii.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., I, xiv.

toutes nos espérances.”<sup>230</sup> Her pure faith shines through in her visage and voice, leading Oursonvilliers to feel uncharacteristically uncomfortable, albeit for a very short time. His resistance to religion’s influence will push him to reject this possible moment of absolution.

The final effort Bruno makes in trying to educate his readers is found in an addendum to the novella, entitled *Réflexions sur l’état naturel à l’homme, et sur deux paradoxes de J.-J. Rousseau ; l’un, que l’homme ait été primitivement sauvage ; l’autre, que l’homme soit bon de sa nature, et se corrompe dans l’état de société*. The *Réflexions* are dedicated to Bruno’s son, Adrien-François, and relies heavily on contemporary science to prove the superiority of civilized (i.e. non-Revolutionary) society. Bruno takes pains to emphasize the idea of long-term development, once again discarding the Revolution as a brief bump in history’s long road. Man is a social animal, and “la civilisation est une conséquence de son moral, et n’en est qu’un développement.”<sup>231</sup> Since he has just spent well over three hundred pages describing the immorality of the Terrorists, it is obvious that with their elimination, the country will be able to resume its civilized progress. Contrary to the Revolution’s disdain for paternal influence, Bruno lauds it, saying “le gouvernement paternel doit avoir été le premier de tous les gouvernemens,”<sup>232</sup> with its supreme authority descending from God the father, an idea on which both the Bourbon and Bonaparte dynasties relied.

Although Bruno acknowledges that man can be fundamentally wicked, he sees institutions as keeping society morally just and restrained. Religion figures as the foremost of these institutions, allowing man to move beyond his natural shortcomings: “Cette bonté ne peut être naturelle à l’homme : de pareils sentimens ne sont inspirés que par la Religion, et nous

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., I, 94.

<sup>231</sup> Bruno, *Réflexions*, 23.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 33.



devons la regarder comme le plus grand bien qu’ait produit la société, comme le lien le plus nécessaire à son maintien.”<sup>233</sup> As society’s greatest achievement, religion for Bruno encompasses basic goodness, like charity, forgiveness, and respect for others. These characteristics had been in short order during the violence of the Terror, and the country suffered greatly for their lack. Only in societies where people care about each other can this goodness flourish. Given the recent atmosphere of fear and distrust, Frenchmen will need to learn to trust their rulers and each other; otherwise, the nation will be little more than a collection of savages struggling to survive, rather than striving to rebuild.

In direct opposition to the ultimate freedom sought by the Marquis de Sade, Bruno urges man to overcome his base nature. Age and wisdom make us best able to resist the destructive passions that push us to commit evil. Man must find, “dans sa raison, des forces capables de réprimer des passions qui pourroient l’égarer.”<sup>234</sup> Bruno believes that man is obligated to fight the passions that can easily lead him astray, rather than simply “se laisser aller” with his natural instincts.<sup>235</sup> Again, Sade would find this stance to be ridiculous. Why should man fight against his natural instincts, merely to conform to societal norms? For Sade, it would be *unnatural* to expect mankind to suppress its nature. Bruno’s closing words summarize his feelings on mankind’s potential: “Non, mon fils, non, l’homme n’est pas bon ; il est foible, très foible, mais il est trop vrai que *les hommes sont méchants*.”<sup>236</sup> Bruno feels that only by acknowledging our faults can we hope to overcome them and make society better for all.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 70. Author’s emphasis.

### 2.3.5 The Role of Physiognomy

A familiar literary topos in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stories, physiognomy is Bruno's primary tool for explaining his characters' personalities. According to Christopher Rivers, physiognomy has been a common semiotic tool for hundreds of years, a system in which "the body is read as a signifier and character, essence, sociopolitical status, or gender as its signifier."<sup>237</sup> It is the character and sociopolitical status that are played upon in Bruno. His characters' personalities and morals are determined in large part by their physical appearance. Of course, he also gives enough background on their characters that the physical description is justified by their actions.

Physiognomy becomes another aesthetic tool for political commentary in *Lioncel*. By setting up the characters as recognizably good or bad, linked to their physical appearances, Bruno is hoping to sway the reader with pseudo-scientific evidence. Dating back to ancient Greek philosophers, physiognomy gained popularity once more in the late eighteenth century, and continued to be used throughout the nineteenth century. The so-called science linked physical traits to moral characteristics. Louis de Bruno uses this method to create immediate recognition of his various characters. While he devotes considerable effort to describing the villains in his piece, Bruno spends considerably less time in his depictions of the other characters. He is much more interested in warning his readers away from the evil they are likely to encounter.

Bruno wastes no time in presenting the physical / moral dichotomy. He devotes considerable effort to portraying the villains in his story, with a less attention given to the heroes'

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<sup>237</sup> Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 3.

description. Bruno was confident that the goodness of Lioncel and his family would shine through, while the audience might need more help identifying scoundrels they might encounter in real life. Within the first few pages, in the chaos after the opening battlefield scene, Lioncel is still easily recognized as an “infortuné Gentilhomme,”<sup>238</sup> even though Francœur does not yet know his identity. Although Oursonvilliers detests Lioncel, he still describes him in very favorable terms: he has a “regard doux” and “belles dents,” with “épaules bien placées; poitrine large; jambes musculeuses et bien faites.”<sup>239</sup> Overall, the impression given is of a man with a handsome face and virile body. Lioncel’s companions recognize him immediately from this account, saying “c’est vous même, monsieur: assurément il vous connoît.”<sup>240</sup> This basic description alone was enough to send Dr. Gaubiac into a panic, fearing for Lioncel’s safety.

In order to ascertain the identity of the man searching for Lioncel, his friends ask Dr. Gaubiac for a description. Gaubiac replies that it will not be a problem to provide this description, because “sa figure m’a tellement frappé que je ne l’oublierai jamais.”<sup>241</sup> The man is described as “gros,” “bilieux,” and “ses yeux sont noirs, brillans et son regard, en dessous.”<sup>242</sup> Lioncel instantly recognizes Oursonvilliers in the depiction of this large, dark, and unforgiving man. Bruno has already prepared the reader for an unfavorable reaction to this particular character, when he explains the repugnance many people felt in his presence. Despite his use of flattery, “la physionomie d’Oursonvilliers étoit ignoble ; son œil, sournois ; [...] sa présence faisoit naître une antipathie qui forçoit à le repousser.”<sup>243</sup> No matter how ingratiating his

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<sup>238</sup> Bruno, I, 6.

<sup>239</sup> Bruno, II, 12-13.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., II, 13.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Bruno, I, 23.

behavior might be, his physiognomy will always reveal his true nature and cause unease for those around him.

Oursonvilliers' frenzies of violence and uncontrollable emotions are manifestations of his natural inclinations. His love for his cousin, Éléonore, is described as a "fureur qui maîtrisoit son âme et tous ses sens," while the idea of Lioncel receiving the lady's love "exaspéroit son esprit jusqu'à la rage, et le lui faisoit souffrir tous les tourmens de l'enfer."<sup>244</sup> When Oursonvilliers finds proof that Lioncel has returned to France, his anger is seen primarily in his physical traits:

Le visage d'Oursonvilliers se décompose; il s'enflamme, ses yeux étincellent de fureur. [...] Un accès de phrénésie transportoit ce méchant homme ; la fièvre la plus violente agitoit son sang et le faisoit bouillonner dans ses veines ; ses os craquoient ; ses dents grinçoient ; sa bouche...<sup>245</sup>

Bruno suspends the description at this point, knowing that the reader can easily see the fiery monster the villain has become. His rage is immediately contrasted with the pure and simple joy of Lioncel's family at Bonal, where "une douce joie remplissoit tous les cœurs et brilloit dans tous les yeux."<sup>246</sup> The purity and goodness of the family marks their physical traits, just as rage distorts Oursonvilliers' features.

In direct comparisons between the two cousins, Nature will always favor Lioncel, something which Oursonvilliers cannot understand or forgive. Even though Oursonvilliers is born with every conceivable advantage, he will always be found lacking when compared to his poor cousin:

L'air noble, la générosité de sentimens exprimée par la physionomie de Lioncel, les agrémens de sa figure, son ton modeste et décent, et l'aménité de son caractère, contrastoient trop avec le physique et le moral d'Oursonvilliers, pour que celui-ci pût

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., I, 111.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., I, 116.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., I, 117.

supporter, sans humiliation, une comparaison qui, pour ainsi dire, l'écrasait dans toutes les sociétés qu'ils fréquentoient l'un et l'autre.<sup>247</sup>

Bruno's intermingling of physical and moral traits demonstrates how each influence the other. There is no way that someone with Oursonvilliers' characteristics can ever triumph over the natural goodness inherent in Lioncel.

Other characters are given physiognomies that correspond perfectly to their virtues or faults. The sweetly innocent Éléonore is described as "animée par une piété fervente," "rayonnante de beauté," and "d'une nature au-dessus de la condition d'une mortelle."<sup>248</sup> Her purity is enough to inspire respect and momentary repentance in Oursonvilliers, but even Éléonore's goodness is not enough to change his character.

Lioncel's staunchest ally, Francœur is a soldier who is slow to anger and quick to defend. His solid physiognomy testifies to his steadfast character. While Bruno does not spend much time describing this secondary character, he does insist on his strength and dependability. The first time we see Francœur, he is wandering a battlefield after being crushed by a horse, and he rapidly saves Lioncel's life by carrying him to safety. When his honor is challenged by fellow soldiers, Bruno shows a soldier "dans l'attitude fière que prend un brave, lorsqu'il est insulté." Ready to challenge all who would question his integrity, he stands "le pied droit en avant, la poitrine en arrière, et la tête haute ; une main soutenoit son sabre, et l'autre en serroit fortement la poignée."<sup>249</sup> His proud stance is immediately justified, when the commanding officer punishes those who have questioned Francœur's loyalty and commends him for doing his duty, although he is actually giving aid to the enemy. Francœur and his parents will continue to shelter Lioncel and his relatives from harm throughout the novella. It is their *tiers état* status that will

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., I, 50.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., I, 94.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., I, 10.

allow them to move freely in Revolutionary society, but it is their loyalty and innate goodness that will guide their actions.

The villains of the piece, the Revolutionaries are described with dark, inhuman terms. In an early scene, set in Paris, they are described as tigers searching for fresh prey. Somewhere between animal and man, they are “vêtus d’une carmagnole, coëffés d’un bonnet fourré, ils portoient de larges moustaches et un grand sabre : c’étoient alors les livrées du patriotisme.”<sup>250</sup> Once again, Bruno’s scorn comes through in his sarcastic “livrées du patriotisme,” an attempt to turn the *mots nouveaux* back on the Revolutionaries. His use of tigers and other ferocious animals to portray the Revolutionaries’ bestial natures reflects a common practice in literature, dating back to Aristotle.<sup>251</sup> The thugs in control of Paris are base and uneducated, barely worthy of the title of men, and Bruno does not hesitate to declare that they are nothing but objects of scorn.

### 2.3.6 *Lioncel* as Political Critique

Although Bruno’s stated goal was never to “fronder aucun gouvernement établi,”<sup>252</sup> he nonetheless feels compelled to share his criticisms of the Revolution, and more particularly, of the Terreur. Through his mocking use of contemporary rhetoric and his portrayal of Terrorist leaders, Bruno leaves no doubt of his derision for those formerly in power. Contemporary politicians, speeches, and forms of entertainment are all examined and found wanting in *Lioncel*.

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., I, 34.

<sup>251</sup> For more information on physiognomy and associated animal characteristics, see Barbara Stafford *Body Criticism: Imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), and Graeme Tytler *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>252</sup> Bruno, xv.

For Lioncel's family, one of the few positive moments in the Revolution comes from the fall of Robespierre and his cohorts. As a means to reassure a loyal retainer, the family "cherchoit à le consoler en lui offrant, dans la révolution qui venoit d'avoir lieu, des motifs d'espérance."<sup>253</sup> The recent "revolution" mentioned is the arrest and imminent execution of most of the reigning Terrorists, giving the country hope that calm and order may be restored. Although the government did not immediately collapse, there was a sense of an impending storm, waiting to sweep away the violence and suffering. Bruno notes: "on s'attendoit à une réaction de la part de ceux qui avoient souffert des horribles vexations que le Comité de surveillance avoit commises, et de la part des parens de ceux qui avoient été sacrifiés."<sup>254</sup> Vengeance will come from those who have suffered most directly under the régime, and from their families, a central theme for Bruno.

Contrary to Sade's theory that a nation which began in crime should continue in that state, Bruno believes that the violent and illegitimate behavior must stop immediately if there is to be any hope for the future. The local Revolutionary committees within *Lioncel* are presented as groups of baseborn men, with occasional petty thieves among their members. These men, however, are quick to adapt to the ever-changing situations in which they find themselves. They are willing to bow to their superiors, when confronted by Oursonvilliers' intelligence and Lioncel's nobility. They are also quick to realize that they must distance themselves from the Parisian committees after 9 thermidor. Appealing to their sense of self-preservation, Gaubiac exhorts the local committee to release the de Pressac family after their arrest on orders of Oursonvilliers:

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<sup>253</sup> Bruno, II, 64.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., II, 108.

En délivrant la famille Pressac pour votre intérêt particulier, le Comité aura l'air de n'agir que par humanité. Nous aurons soin de répandre dans la ville, que les arrestations ont été ordonnées par le Comité de sûreté générale, et que vous n'avez exécuté ses ordres contre votre gré ; cela fera un bon effet ; puis vous en délivrerez quelques autres qui vous donneront aussi des preuves de leur reconnaissance.<sup>255</sup>

Most Revolutionaries are willing to be guided toward a calmer and more stable time, but the rabid Jacobins insist on continuing. Demonstrating his own version of hope for the future, Brutus, one of the basest and most virulent Revolutionaries in the novel, states that “il y a d'autres Robespierre dans la Convention : on aura toujours besoin de gens, comme nous. La tête change, mais la queue reste.”<sup>256</sup> It is this devotion to crime and violence that will cause the downfall of men who might otherwise have been saved.

The preoccupation with the importance of crime to the newly created Republic was quite prominent in contemporary politics. Louis Antoine de Saint-Just put forth a theoretical framework for a radically egalitarian society, something not yet achieved by the Revolution. His *Fragments sur les institutions républicaines* includes encouragement to continue on the path started by the Revolution, and more specifically, the Terreur:

L'exercice de la terreur a blasé le crime, comme les liqueurs fortes blasent le palais.

Sans doute, il n'est pas encore temps de faire le bien. Le bien particulier que l'on fait est un palliatif. Il faut attendre un mal général assez grand pour que l'opinion générale éprouve le besoin de mesures propres à faire le bien. Ce qui produit le bien général est toujours terrible, ou paraît bizarre lorsqu'on commence trop tôt.<sup>257</sup>

Until the populace feels threatened enough to work for the general good, there can be no relief from the Terreur. Although most people cannot understand the necessity of recent actions, Saint-Just sees its potential for blunting crime and encouraging equality among all citizens.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., II, 110.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., II, 112.

<sup>257</sup> Saint-Just, 148.



Louis de Bruno also sees the Terreur as blunting society's impulses, but, for him, it is good taste and civilized behavior that are made to suffer. Rather than staying the course and waiting for the country to reach its depths, Bruno urges an immediate cessation of the violence and chaos that marked the Terreur: "Cette transition a été trop forte ; il n'est pas de la nature d'un état violent de durer."<sup>258</sup> While Revolutionaries like Saint-Just and Sade may push for continued and increased activity, it is Bruno's overwhelming desire that the country will pause and reflect on its actions. The ultimate goal of the country's reflections would be a return to its senses in the face of such bad taste and poor decisions.

## 2.4 SADE AND BRUNO

The Marquis de Sade and Louis de Bruno each sought in his own way to influence the country during its time of extraordinary crisis. The Revolution, and, more specifically, the Terror, shone as instances of incredible possibility. For Sade, the potential was there to create a new sort of Utopia, in which citizens would have almost limitless freedom. Everything the Revolution had dared to dream could come to pass if only the country would continue pushing just a bit more.

The world created in *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, and the rules for a new society laid out in its "Français, encore un effort si voulez être républicains" represent Sade's attempt to lure his audience into accepting and expanding the freedoms presented by the Revolution. Not satisfied with the current level of personal liberty offered by the government, Sade pushed his readers into recognizing the advantages of fewer laws. With fewer activities considered illegal,

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<sup>258</sup> Bruno, viii.

the country would be free to continue on the glorious path begun in 1789. For Sade, progress was only being bogged down by preoccupations with archaic laws and mores.

Once students were indoctrinated, both physically and logically, in the new libertine-inspired fashion to accept ultimate freedom, they would go on to become ideal citizens, defending and upholding personal liberty at all costs. Education would provide a solid basis for future societal interaction, eliminating the need for laws and ensuring that everyone could fulfill his or her potential. As Sade frequently noted, “la philosophie doit tout dire,”<sup>259</sup> but truth is only possible in absolute freedom. In order to achieve the freedom to say everything, it might be necessary to crush those who would cling to the traditional codes and beliefs. As a final exam of sorts, Eugénie, *Philosophie*’s main student, is encouraged to destroy her mother, the one person who tries to interfere with her new-found libertine freedom. This symbolic destruction of the old ways is Sade’s not-so-subtle message to his readers that only through the suffering and death of the mother can the child truly be free. Extending this metaphor to the country, France can only experience real freedom once all traces of the past are wiped clean.

In a mirrored sense, the past is also the main motivating factor for Louis de Bruno. For him, it was only a return to the past and its values that could see the country through its recent horrific actions. While there was no way to erase the violent crimes that had been committed during the Terror, Bruno felt that expiation might lead France back to its correct moral path. As opposed to a Sadien Utopia, Bruno saw restoration of the monarchy as the only way forward. With the fall of Robespierre, new hope was possible.

Rather than educating people with the goal of creating new citizens, Bruno sought to reintroduce basic principles. *Re*-education was what the public needed, since logic must

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<sup>259</sup> *Juliette*, 586.

naturally prevail over passion. Sade, would of course, disagree, seeing manmade logic as the cause of most of society's problems. For Bruno, too much passionate activity and too little reason had taken hold of the country in recent years. The only way to stop the chaos was to halt the spiral into lawlessness. Oursonvilliers remains true to Bruno's message of good's eventual triumph over evil, with his inability to accept forgiveness even though it means taking his own life. The characters who are willing (and eager) to return to the previous ways are those who will overcome the Revolution's disasters and will ultimately emerge the only victors.

Both authors set up their arguments in a didactic style, with the reader being the true student. While Sade chose a lively and sarcastic tone to deliver his message, Bruno used sentimental remorse to appeal to his reader. The authors also chose to remove the actual storytelling from Paris, the site of the Terror's worst violence. *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* is a staged intervention in a libertine's country estate, which has limited access but all of the accoutrements the characters could want. *Lioncel's* story is also told at a country estate, but rather than a place for the wealthy to escape the city, this location is described as an *émigré* enclave to protect its inhabitants from further danger. Interestingly, the only harm that comes to any of the characters takes place not in the *émigré* hideout, but rather, in Sade's pleasure palace. Pain is a necessary tool in libertine education, both for the masters and the students.

The structures of the two stories differ significantly, with one important exception. Bruno presents his novella as a story about a recently returned *émigré* acquaintance. The author is allowed two weeks in which to gather his thoughts before relating the tale. Sade's tale describes a young girl whose father has arranged for her to have a thorough education in the ways of libertinage. The similarity between the two stories comes midway through the works. Both tales are interrupted by the author to allow the reader a brief pause in the action. For

Bruno, the interruption serves several practical purposes. The story is supposedly being told by the narrator to a group of his friends. The tale is so emotionally draining and involved that he begs leave to stop and collect his thoughts for the remainder of the story. The break also serves as a perfect place to divide the novella into two physical parts, to facilitate its publication.

For Sade, interruptions within the text are quite common. His alternation between sexual passions and philosophical discourses are characteristic of his style. In *Philosophie*, however, he carries this literary *va-et-vient* one step further by inserting a political pamphlet that has supposedly been purchased at the Palais de l'Égalité in Paris. Having already seduced his audience into accepting his logic, he now seeks to push them even further toward total liberty.

One of the biggest differences between the two authors is in the treatment of their characters. Sade sees his creations as either potential libertines or as worthless side characters to be used or destroyed. The innocent can be corrupted by good teachers, and if they cannot, they are made to suffer. The few lower class servants in the novella are used exclusively as teaching tools, told to remove themselves when important issues are discussed. For Bruno, the lower classes are vital to his theme. While they do not play the major roles within the story, the heroes and villains both need subordinates to support them. For the black and white, good and evil characters, their servants and minions will make all the difference in their success. It is only with the help of an unending stream of supporters that Lioncel will make it back to his family and triumph over his nemesis. Conversely, the Revolutionaries will bring about their own downfall with their continuous in-fighting and lack of loyalty. There will be no shifting of values for the characters, nor do any of them try to better themselves throughout the story, unlike Sade's libertines who are always willing to try new and creative ideas.

Appealing to his audience's sentiments, Bruno strove to convince his audience of the country's need to repent. By setting up a strict dichotomy between good and bad characters, he is easily able to create horror at the injustice suffered by his heroes. If the de Lioncel-Pressac family had not been so wonderfully pure, it is likely that they would have been destroyed. Despite the dangers of the time and their occasional losses, God protected them and rewarded their loyalty to the monarchy.

Bruno provides a happy ending to reward his characters and the reader, who shared the emotional journey with his storyteller. The lovers and their families are reunited, and will live happily ever after, albeit with some lifelong sorrow for those they have lost. The villain of the piece eliminates himself, unable to live in a world where good will prevail. The deaths of the Terrorists in the novella provide hope and stability for the future. The survival of the family implies hope for the continuation of the monarchy, although the story was published in 1800, well before the Restoration would officially take place. Without the monarchy, Bruno felt that the country was in danger of continuing to devour itself.

Sade encourages his reader to develop along with Eugénie, the stated student of *Philosophie*. Her development from relative ingénue to promising libertine is accomplished in a methodical and logical series of experiments and philosophical lessons. By the end of the novel, Eugénie is not only able to challenge her mentors' logic, she has also proven her worthiness to lead a life of libertinage. Sade even grants the novel his version of a happy ending, with Eugénie destroying her mother in order to continue perpetrating violence. Eugénie will push the limits of accepted society throughout her life, destroying the mores of the old order, much as she destroyed her own mother.

*La Philosophie dans le boudoir* was composed in a time of uncertainty, but unlike the years of the Terror, 1795 offered some hope for the future. Robespierre and his cohorts had been, for the most part, executed and France was moving into a new form of government, which appeared willing to respect the freedoms gained by the Revolution, but without the violence and extreme chaos of the past two years. For Sade, this moment would represent the Revolution's ultimate potential. He was unwilling to return to the abuses of the Ancien Régime, but he proved unable to adapt to the coming Empire. Sade needed to remain in some sort of revolution and felt that the country could only benefit from continued, and yet limited, chaos.

The themes of terror, education, and power used in these novels show how the Marquis de Sade and Louis de Bruno thought about the nation. Sade used sarcasm to point out the weaknesses inherent in current governments, while Bruno used sentimentality to inspire loyalty to the Ancien Régime. Sade's concept of the Nation was quite different from Bruno's vision; they both sought to educate good citizens, but their ideals were light years apart.

### **3.0 LITERATURE THRIVES ON HISTORICAL FEAR: THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN VICTOR HUGO AND JULES VERNE.**

“History has its truth, and so has legend. Legendary truth  
is of another nature than historical truth. Legendary truth is  
invention whose result is reality.”  
- Victor Hugo, *Quatrevingt-Treize*

Although historical framework is very important for understanding written works in their context, this study is most interested in how, when, and why events were narrated. In order to situate the texts, I will provide some brief historical and political background, but this chapter's main discussion will center on textual representations of Revolutionary France written in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. The Revolution remained an important reference for writers and politicians throughout the nineteenth century, with many of its historical aspects being repeated during the Paris Commune.

From 1789 until 1871, there were three revolutions, four monarchs, two empires, three republics, and two Parisian Communes in France. For each of these régimes, internal order was tantamount. The change of monarchic dynasties in 1830 made a full restoration of the Ancien Régime ever more elusive. One of the most important events of the nineteenth century was the Revolution of 1848, leading to France's Second Republic. The Republic's greatest impact was perhaps on the generation of young writers and politicians, including Victor Hugo and Jules Verne, who lived through its brief and turbulent régime.

The short-lived Second Republic ended with President Louis-Napoléon's coup d'état, making France once again an imperial nation. The Second Empire was based on conservative values and cooperation with both the Church and monarchists. The radicalism of the Revolution and the first two republics was shunned in favor of more stability. Although there was some resistance to this latest change of government, the newly crowned Napoléon III received overwhelming support in plebiscites held after his ascension to the throne. Nonetheless, the ongoing power struggle led many authors to consider questions of personal identity, political connections, and social responsibility.

The Second Empire was a relatively peaceful time for France internally, although the country did participate in several international conflicts, including the Crimean War (1853-1856). Nonetheless, the chaos and uncertainty of the Terror can be seen in the lingering ambiguities and anxieties associated with the Third Republic. The early nineteenth century had left the country with the question of its national identity. France cried out for explanations and reassurances after the battles and divisions, both internal and external, that the nation had faced in recent generations.

The Empire's most problematic conflict came to be the power struggle between Napoléon III and Otto von Bismarck of Prussia. The Franco-Prussian War effectively ended on 1 September 1870, with France's defeat at Sedan. Napoléon III's surrender at this battle led to the fall of the Second Empire and the first foreign occupation the country had suffered in generations. It also gave birth to the internal conflict that would result in the Paris Commune, which Karl Marx would later hail as the first true proletarian uprising, noting that "this was the



first revolution in which the working class was openly acknowledged as the only class capable of social initiative.”<sup>260</sup> As a truly proletarian revolution, Marx saw great potential in the Commune:

The direct antithesis to the empire was the Commune. The cry of “social republic,” with which the Revolution of February was ushered in by the Paris proletariat, did but express a vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself. The Commune was the positive form of that Republic.<sup>261</sup>

For Karl Marx and many others, the Commune was seen as a new incarnation of the ideals of a republican system far removed from the corruption of the Empire. It was also the first socialist government in Europe, which was seen as a great threat to bourgeois rule. The bourgeoisie’s loathing of the Commune is one of the reasons that reprisals against it were so swift and violent.

Although the country had survived the difficulties of the Second Empire, the specter of the Terror made its reappearance with the Paris Commune and the occupation of Prussian troops. The nineteenth-century use of the term ‘Commune’ was seen as early as September 1870 to encompass the “revolutionary nationalism produced by the war and the fall of Napoléon III,” as well as the “Parisian patriotism heightened by the siege.”<sup>262</sup> The original Commune had seized power in Paris in 1792, and was a major force in overthrowing the monarchy, organizing national defense, and stirring up the populace for the September Massacres, which killed thousands of suspected enemies of the Revolution. The history associated with the eighteenth-century Commune rang throughout the rhetoric in speeches, as a contemporary bourgeois orator noted: “la commune de Versailles, la commune de Rouen, la commune de Marseille, ne troublent personne mais la Commune de Paris ! c’est bien différent. Pourquoi ? C’est parce qu’il

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<sup>260</sup> Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (New York: International Publishers, 1933), 45.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>262</sup> Robert Tombs, *The Paris Commune 1871* (London: Longman, 1999), 73.

y a du sang sur ce mot-là.”<sup>263</sup> Other communes existed throughout France at this time, but there was only one Commune (with a capital C) that could inspire fear and awe in the French psyche.

The French failure in the Franco-Prussian War and the ill-fated Paris Commune of 1871 left the country grappling with how to represent this crucial period in its history. Monuments in Paris were quickly erected, focusing on the bravery and steadfast character of “les morts pour la patrie,” soldiers and common citizens who sacrificed everything to protect the homeland. Well-known writers, such as Victor Hugo and Emile Zola, tended to focus on the hardships endured by individuals in the face of poor governmental choices. Stories of troops being sacrificed to defend useless land, brave young peasants standing up to advancing regiments, and girls sending their lovers off to war make up a majority of the best-known novels of the time. As we will see, the stories and poems written during this time typically identify Napoléon III’s avarice and ambition as the source of the country’s woes. Anyone associated with his régime is portrayed as grasping and incompetent, blindly leading France into war and eventual defeat.

Novels and other forms of writing were quite influential during the Third Republic, creating *lieux de mémoire*, whether as spaces of war or of calls for repentance for future interpretation. Taking into account the fact that most novels dealing with the Franco-Prussian War were written well after the Second Empire’s defeat, it is not surprising that they are overwhelmingly anti-imperial in tone. Most texts tend to express a deep sense of mourning and regret, but they also reveal the contemporary social struggle to come to terms with the Commune’s uprising and the War’s legacy.

While the French Revolution and its subsequent Terror continued to be a main point of reference in many nineteenth-century texts, the mediation of contemporary events shifted focus

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<sup>263</sup> Jacques Rougerie, *Paris libre 1871* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 38-39.

from internal to external threats due to the recent Franco-Prussian War. Texts written during this time frequently show an amplification of Prussia's role in world politics, allowing current events to color their tales. This trend is clearly shown in the works I have chosen to analyze, Victor Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize* (1874) and Jules Verne's *Le Chemin de France* (1887), both of which are also set during the French Revolution.

### 3.1 A CRUSHING DEFEAT

The Franco-Prussian War was waged from 15 July 1870 to 1 February 1871, and marked both the end of French hegemony in Europe and the rise of the unified German states. Although the War was ostensibly fought over the succession of the Spanish throne, it was in reality a flexing of muscle between two powerful states.<sup>264</sup> A similar situation will present itself in the conflicts leading up to World War II, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Within two months of declaring war, the French Emperor and his army had been captured at the Battle of Sedan, virtually ensuring the German victory. After the overwhelming defeat of France at the hands of the Prussian Army, the Second Empire was deposed and replaced by France's Third Republic. The Republic was declared on September 4, 1870, with Adolphe Thiers and Léon Gambetta as its leaders. The Government of the National Defense was housed in Versailles, because Paris remained under siege by the Prussians. A state of emergency existed throughout France, leaving most of the country operating under a feeling of duress. Conditions in the capital deteriorated rapidly, and the working class was the first to feel the effects of the

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<sup>264</sup> For detailed information about the political posturing leading to the War, see Alistar Horne, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune, 1870-1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 35-38.

shortages and hardships. Within a few months of the siege being declared, the population of the city had been reduced to eating rats, family pets, and even Castor and Pollux, two elephants in the Paris Zoo.<sup>265</sup> Hugo briefly notes this event as yet one more proof of how bad the siege had gotten: “On a abattu l’éléphant du Jardin des Plantes. Il a pleuré. On va le manger. Les Prussiens continuent de nous envoyer six mille bombes par jour.”<sup>266</sup> In the face of such suffering, the city came to regard itself as the last bastion of French resistance against the invaders, while the rest of the country merely wanted the city to surrender and the entire episode to be over.

Unable to continue resisting the German advances, Paris capitulated on 28 January, 1871. The armistice of 28 January provided for the election of a French National Assembly, which negotiated the actual peace. The elections were a crushing blow to Paris, which received only forty-three out of seven hundred sixty-eight seats, of which nearly all were pro-war radical republicans, led by Louis Blanc, Victor Hugo, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, all men who had been active in the republican uprisings of 1848.<sup>267</sup> Four hundred of the seats were won by supporters of the monarchy,<sup>268</sup> thus ensuring that a conservative government would deal with the Prussians and the rebellious capital. The message to the city of Paris was clear: it would no longer be allowed to dictate the country’s actions. The settlement, which allowed Prussian access to Paris, was directed by Aldophe Thiers and Jules Favre and agreed upon on March 1, 1871. The official French government met in Versailles, and was seen as representing provincial interests at the

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<sup>265</sup> The massacre of these two beloved residents of the Paris Zoo quickly became symbolic of the suffering within the city. See Rupert Christiansen, *Paris Babylon: The Story of the Paris Commune* (New York: Viking, 1995), 245.

<sup>266</sup> Henri Guillemin, *Carnets intimes de Victor Hugo: 1870-1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 88.

<sup>267</sup> Tombs, 62.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 273.

cost of Paris. The capital had stood firm in its resistance to the German troops while many of the smaller towns fell to the enemy. Karl Marx observed that the city:

had to stand forward as the self-sacrificing champion of France, whose salvation from ruin and whose regeneration were impossible without the revolutionary overthrow of the political and social conditions that had engendered the Second Empire, and, under its fostering care, matured into utter rottenness.<sup>269</sup>

The city was seen as the last bastion against the chaos wrought by the Second Empire's weakness and ineptitude. Their staunch resistance and months of sacrifice gave Parisians a sense of isolation in the face of the other cities' capitulations. While Parisians, rich and poor alike, had been dining on rats and family pets, provincial residents were tired of the sacrifices they were making and pushed the government to end to the stand-off. Thiers, the head of the provisional government, moved to disarm the city's National Guard. The decision was met with great resistance as the government's soldiers attempted to remove the Guards' canons protecting the city from Montmartre.

From March until May, when the official Treaty of Frankfurt was signed, the government was threatened by an insurrectionist movement in Paris, known as the Paris Commune. The strength of the Parisian radicals was only enhanced by the absence of conservatives in Paris. Many middleclass families had fled the city after the first siege, resulting in the loss of up to fifty thousand antirevolutionary troops.<sup>270</sup>

While the workers and lower-to-middle class Frenchmen had long suffered under the Second Empire, it was in Paris that politically radical groups like the remaining Jacobins were able to meld with Louis Auguste Blanqui's style of violent communism. These groups appealed to the people who had maintained their memories of both the 1789 and 1848 Revolutions. As

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<sup>269</sup> Karl Marx, 56.

<sup>270</sup> Tombs, 67.

Jacques Rougerie points out, many of the themes associated with the original Revolution could be seen in contemporary speeches. He cites examples taken from an anti-communard journal of the time, *Les Murailles politiques françaises, Paris, Versailles, la Province* to illustrate just what criticisms of Communard rhetoric were being offered. This journal noted many societal problems created by the Communards: according to the editor, atheist and blasphemous rhetoric was prevalent, with popular speeches using phrases such as the “sans-culotte Jésus,” who was “le premier républicain sincère;” regicide, civil war, and assassinations were acceptable means to combat despotism; abolition of the family, based on the emancipation of women; and the forceful re-appropriation of goods.<sup>271</sup> The papers of the time often tried to use the Terrorists’ words against the Commune, citing discourse like Danton’s “vous étiez dessous, mettez-vous dessus: voilà toute la révolution”<sup>272</sup> to point out the risks of following such radical rhetoric.

The Commune uprising lasted from 18 March to 28 May, 1871, and was established to counter the monarchical leanings of the National Assembly. The municipal elections held on 26 March, 1871 resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Parisian revolutionaries, who immediately formed the Commune government. The city promptly seceded from the official government housed in Versailles, forming a *Fédéré* government of its own. Several of the new leaders were self-proclaimed Jacobins who followed the Revolutionary tradition and wanted the Commune to control the anti-German effort. Despite some attempts at social reform, the insurgents were unable to organize an effective army. On 21 May, Versaillais troops penetrated the city and began what would be known as “la semaine sanglante.” With the government’s victorious entry into the city, bloody reprisals against the Communards were quickly carried out. Although estimates vary wildly, most historians place the number killed at upwards of thirty

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<sup>271</sup> Rougerie, 24.

<sup>272</sup> Alphonse de Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins* Tome premier (Paris: Plon, 1984), 536.

thousand, with fifty thousand imprisoned or deported.<sup>273</sup> As soon as the Commune had been brutally suppressed, the Treaty of Frankfurt was put into place. Following the Treaty's conditions, Germany annexed Alsace and a large portion of Lorraine, although a few key towns were spared. One of the main points of *Le Chemin de France* is the very idea of having 'French citizens' in German territory, a nightmare that would haunt the French nation through World War I until the conclusion of World War II. In addition to the loss of its lands, France had to pay a staggering indemnity and cover the costs of the German occupation until the debt was fully paid.

People in Paris felt betrayed by the Republican government's negotiations with the enemy. They were particularly resentful of the Prussian occupation of the city, which had been arranged in return for retaining control of the eastern city of Belfort. The rest of the country did not understand Parisians' unwillingness to put up with a temporary Prussian occupation as part of the peace negotiations. Henry Labouchere, a British journalist covering the War in Paris, grumbled: "I am fully convinced that this vain silly population would rather that King William should double the indemnity which he demands from France than march with his troops down the rue de Rivoli."<sup>274</sup> Finally, despite fears of violent outbreaks, the city's populace decided simply to ignore the Prussian parade down the Champs Élysées, but feelings of resentment continued to boil below the surface. Barricades were erected to contain the parade route, preventing Prussian soldiers from wandering further into the city and there were few people to be found in the streets. As Rupert Christiansen notes: "the archway of the Arc de Triomphe had been blocked up. No newspapers were published, no omnibuses ran. The fountains were stilled.

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<sup>273</sup> Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Politics, and Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 25.

<sup>274</sup> Christiansen, 277.

No café or shop would have dared to open for business.”<sup>275</sup> Paris, more than ever, had become a space of war, waiting for the next battle to occur. This atmosphere would be repeated two generations later, when Paris became a disputed space at the very beginning of World War II, when German troops would once again march down the Champs Élysées in June 1940.

The pro-Versaillais journal, *Le Soir*, censored the city for its liberal decadence: “Paris has morally ceased to be the capital of France. When a city can contain so much crime and folly, it is condemned to degenerate and if it at present escapes the Biblical fire from heaven, it cannot escape the pity and contempt of men.”<sup>276</sup> This need to cleanse Paris of its immorality would prove to be a popular theme for many years to come. The city quickly became the greatest casualty of the War.

The defeat of the Paris Commune left power firmly in the hands of a conservative government that answered to a National Assembly controlled by monarchists. However, within ten years, the Republicans had once again gained control of the government, and were able to push for a Republic as the only stable form of government. A Republic was, as Thiers put it, the régime “which divides us the least.” He also believed that it was the legitimate form of government, and as such must be respected: “the Republic exists, it is the legal government of the country; to wish for anything else would be tantamount to revolution.”<sup>277</sup> The threat of yet another revolution would have been enough to quell all but the strongest anarchists and communists after the years of turmoil the country had just endured. Although the governments within the Third Republic would change several times, there was never a serious attempt to return to the monarchy. Opposition to the Republic within aristocratic, ultra Catholic, and

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>277</sup> Sowerwine, 27.



military circles did result in a few attempts to overthrow the existing régimes, including an 1886-1891 movement called *boulangisme*, which sought to avenge French losses to Germany. The Dreyfus Affair also marked a moment of division which challenged the authority of the government, but once again, there was no true movement to bring down the Third Republic.

The decade after the Commune was filled with moments of national and personal self-reflection. In an effort to strengthen the country and bring supporters of the Commune into the Republic, an amnesty was granted in 1880, around the time many memorials for the War were being created. The very concept of amnesty is tied to the acknowledgement and forgiveness of crimes, which first must be admitted as such. Indeed, trials of Communards continued until 1878<sup>278</sup>, with public opinion slowly turning against further retribution. Despite much discussion about whether the Communards should be forgiven, and if so, to what degree, the amnesty was voted in on 10 July 1880.

The first true signs of acceptance of the Revolution comes in the late nineteenth century. A Monarchist and Vendean senator, Emmanuel Halgan, perhaps best sums up the mood of the time, when he compares 1789 and 1871:

I find there [in 1789], in the crimes committed around the Hôtel de Ville, a total resemblance to the infamous murders which were committed in the Rue des Rosiers [...] The date of July 14 [...] – for treasons, for desertions from the armed forces, for violence, and for blood spilled – seems to me to have been an anticipation of March 18.<sup>279</sup>

A few days after the general amnesty was passed, the bitter debate over the establishment of a national holiday also came to an end as the government celebrated its first 14 juillet in 1880, as yet another symbolic link with its republican past. The festivities served to reinforce France's glorious tradition of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, ideals which the Commune were now seen as

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<sup>278</sup> Rougerie, 257.

<sup>279</sup> Jean Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880: The History of the Amnesty of 1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 460.

trying to defend in the face of German occupation. Not only were artists and writers striving to exhume France's past; by 1880, the government had officially entered the arena to re-appropriate national, collective history.

Another important factor in the general feeling of good will toward the victims of 1870-1871 came about with the creation of clubs, such as "Le Souvenir français," a group devoted to consecrating cemetery and battlefield monuments of the War. Through private donations and public subscriptions, groups began to raise money and awareness for memorials dedicated to France's most recent wartime heroes. The members of these groups were among those who were, according to Antoine Prost, cultivating a "volonté de revanche."<sup>280</sup> With the passing of time, many Frenchmen had begun to resent the sense of national mourning that permeated the years following France's defeat in 1870.

The establishment of memorials and the creation of pro-French literature helped to balance out the feelings of guilt and shame that had been thrust on the country. By the time of the Franco-Prussian War, society had already come to accept physical edifices as *lieux de mémoire*, spaces that embodied French history. While some effort was being made to protect the memorials from vandalism and political backlash from subsequent régimes, writers were able to "preserve" these same spaces within their works: "ils tentent de promouvoir la préservation de ces monuments à travers l'écriture, e/ancrant ainsi sur des pages de papier leurs idées, leurs émotions visuelles par la plume."<sup>281</sup> Conserving these monuments, whether in real life or in fictional accounts, meant safeguarding the thoughts and emotions of French society. History was thus preserved through both the physical monuments and the fictional stories of the time.

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<sup>280</sup> Antoine Prost "Les Monuments aux morts," in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, *La République*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1997), 200.

<sup>281</sup> Agnès Peysson-Zeiss, *Littérature et architecture: Le dix-neuvième siècle* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1998), 8.

Pierre Nora sees national memories as being bolstered by *lieux de mémoire*, whether these sites are physical monuments or texts dealing with historical events. Bastille Day became a date invested with “une signification supérieure qui correspond aux idéaux de la jeune République et peut fonctionner comme mythe fondateur définitif, irrévocable du nouveau régime.”<sup>282</sup> According to other writers in the Nora collection, the 1878 Universal Exposition in Paris introduced a “motif réconciliateur, elle est symbole du redressement national et de l’indépendance retrouvée.”<sup>283</sup> *Lieux de mémoire* serve as both guardians and repositories of national memory. Each memory stored within these spaces is subject to the vagrancies of history. Of course, the very nature of history itself can change from one régime to the next.

An in-depth study on how artistic régimes can be affected by political changes, Jacques Rancière’s *The Politics of Aesthetics*, urges the reader to look at history using three different methods: the scientific (relying on visible characteristics), the narrative (structures which are presented in a “readable” form), and the political (appealing to a common history). Taking advantage of all three methods, art “incessantly restages the past,”<sup>284</sup> meaning that it serves to contrast régimes of historicity. According to Rancière, the revolution that dismantled the “correlation between subject matter and mode of representation”<sup>285</sup> first took place in literature. Authors such as Victor Hugo and Gustave Flaubert focused on stories of everyday life customs, in contrast to historians’ stories of events. This aesthetic revolution made two existing ideas interdependent: “the blurring of the borders between the logic of facts and the logic of fictions

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<sup>282</sup> Christian Amalvi “Le 14 juillet: Du dies irae à jour de fête,” in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, *La République*, 385.

<sup>283</sup> Jean-Marie Goulemot and Eric Walter “Les Centenaires de Voltaire et de Rousseau: Les Deux lampions des Lumières,” in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1, *La République*, 351.

<sup>284</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 24.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

and the new mode of rationality that characterizes the science of history.”<sup>286</sup> The new “science of history” had become increasingly popular in the nineteenth century, permeating everything from children’s school lessons to popular literature. The historical novel that grew out of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly a response to the recent past, “blurring” the lines between fiction and historical facts.

The specter of the Terror was prevalent in discussions of the country’s current political crises in literary circles. Emile Zola frequently referred to it in an attempt to express his horror over the actions committed both by the Communards and the government. In a letter dated 19 April 1871, he states: “Terror reigns. Individual liberty and respect for property are violated, the clergy are odiously hounded, perquisitions and requisitions are used as a means of government: such is the truth in all its misery and shame.”<sup>287</sup> Taking his criticism of current events even further, he writes a few weeks later that “it is not the Terror that governs us, it is a nightmare.”<sup>288</sup> For Zola and many other writers of the time, the current régime had moved beyond a historical moment and was now responsible for the horrendous position in which France finds herself.

The instability and ambiguity associated with the years following the collapse of the Second Empire and the French wartime defeat led to a delay in direct literary representations, but within a decade, many writers were willing and able to take on this daunting task. Taking into account the fact that most stories dealing with the Franco-Prussian War were written after the Second Empire’s defeat, it is not surprising that they are anti-imperial in tone. A deep sense of mourning and regret is frequently conveyed by the authors. While they portray a country in

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>287</sup> Emile Zola, letter 19 April 1871, cited in John Milner, *Art, War, and Revolution in France, 1870-1871: Myth, Reportage, and Reality* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 150.

<sup>288</sup> Zola, letter 3 May 1871, cited in Milner, 152.

steeped in sorrow, they do not show a feeling of repentance for the recent war, nor do they attempt to categorize the participants as either loyal Frenchmen or as rebellious Communards.

The fictional accounts dealing with the War and the Commune written in the decade following the incidents are overwhelmingly republican in tone. Foremost among these authors, Emile Zola led a group of young writers in a collection of short stories having the war as its central theme. *Les Soirées de Médan* (1880) contains six stories, all showing the divisions going through French society at this time, including economic, social, and political considerations. As in the majority of stories written about the war, the Médan heroes are brave individuals who are simply trying to defend their homes or families.

Two stories within the collection are noteworthy examples of the Médan group's disapproval of how the War had been handled. In Zola's *L'Attaque du Moulin*, the callousness shown by both French and Prussian troops in the story is a common theme in works written after the War ended. The inept leadership of the French Army and the utter disregard for the country's suffering were at the heart of much of the criticism launched against the Empire. The outstanding example of conscious patriotism in the collection is displayed in Maupassant's *Boule de Suif*. The story of the title character's treatment by her bourgeois companions is easily read as a condemnation of how the Communards were seen immediately after the invasion. The largest group to resist the Prussian advance, the Paris Commune had to fight not only the foreign enemy, but the Versaillais government at the same time. Despite its best efforts, the Commune was denounced by the French government and covered in shame, much like Maupassant's title character. There is a Republican among the group who opposes the bourgeois' plans to sacrifice Boule de Suif for their own comfort; however, his resistance can easily be read as one of jealousy, since he, too, wanted to sleep with the prostitute, but was rebuffed. She will be the

only one truly to suffer from the experience, although the others will be mildly inconvenienced by the delay and irritated by the Republican's whistling of the *Marseillaise* as the story ends. The song, which had only just become the French national anthem, serves both to torment the patriotic lead character and to discomfort the anti-republican bourgeois passengers.

In addition to his writing with the *Soirées* group, Zola also wrote several full-length novels set during the War. The most scathing work of the time, *La Débâcle* (1892) is set in 1870 and is one of Zola's most popular works of fiction. The novel seeks to explain why the Second Empire ended in military defeat and civil bloodshed and focuses on ordinary soldiers who demonstrate bravery in the face of suffering caused by circumstances they cannot control. The debacle referred to in the title is the "murder of a nation,"<sup>289</sup> a crime committed by Emperor Napoléon III and his cohorts. The lack of leadership, both in the army and the country as a whole, are seen as the leading causes of France's defeat; according to Zola: "the whole absence of any plan or energetic leadership were precipitating the disaster."<sup>290</sup> Zola argues that the brutal suppression of the Commune is yet another aggressive action taken by the bourgeoisie against the courageous people of France. Like many novels of the time, this story offers little sense of national unity; rather, the focus is on the suffering caused by an apathetic régime:

In Père-Lachaise, which had been bombarded for four days and finally captured grave by grave, one hundred and forty-eight [sic] were thrown against a wall, and the plaster dripped great red tears. [...] It was said that an order to stop the executions had come from Versailles. But the killing went on just the same. Thiers, for all his pure glory as the liberator of the country, was to go down for ever as the legendary butcher of Paris, while Marshal MacMahon, the defeated soldier of Froeshwiller, whose proclamations of victory covered the walls, was henceforward to be nothing but the conqueror of Père-Lachaise.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Emile Zola, *The Debacle*, trans. Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 114.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 505-506.

For Zola, the very men who were supposed to lead the country were the ones who would betray her at the deepest level. Even though “an order to stop the executions” was supposedly issued by the French government, the anarchy and need for vengeance present in Paris during the Bloody Week prevented any possibility of successfully conveying orders to the soldiers. The killings would continue until the country had satisfied its bloodlust on its target, the Commune and anyone associated with it.

Victor Hugo also wrote some war-themed works following the repression of the Commune, including his semi-autobiographical *L'Année terrible*. This collection of poems deals in part with the siege of Paris and the horrors of war. With titles such as “Paris diffamé à Berlin,” “Les Fusillés,” and “Entre deux bombardements,” the poems clearly express Hugo’s concern over the suffering caused by the War. His appeal for peace comes as a plea to the nation’s decency and a reminder of the capital’s importance: “Oh! comme ils vont trembler et crier sous les cieux, /Sangloter, appeler à leur aide la ville, /La nation qui hait l’Euménide civile, /Toute la France, nous, nous tous qui détestons /Le meurtre pêle-mêle et la guerre à tâtons!” (*Les Fusillés*) Hugo ends the poem by referring to the phantoms of the executed Communards that will continue to haunt the country for its failure to come together in the face of external threats.

Like Zola, Hugo laid the fault for the War squarely on the shoulders of the Second Empire and those in power immediately after its collapse. In exile for nearly twenty years, Hugo would only return once the country was free of Napoléon III. Unlike many of his compatriots, however, he was particularly concerned with the fate of the capital. “Paris bloqué” is a lament for the city’s sufferings, but, at the same time, it sings the praises of her eternal beauty:

Tu t’éveilles déesse et chasses le satyre.  
Tu redeviens guerrière en devenant martyre ;

Et dans l'honneur, le beau, le vrai, les grandes mœurs,  
Tu renaiss d'un côté quand de l'autre tu meurs.<sup>292</sup>

His support of Paris and his compassion for the Commune are evident in every poem, along with hope that the country could recover from the terrible toll asked of it during these years.

### 3.2 VICTOR HUGO

Victor Hugo grew up as the son of an army officer who served during the French Revolution. His father faithfully served the Republic and was responsible in part for the 'cleansing' of Brittany. The Vendean rebellion went into full bloom following the *levée en masse* of 1793, and the region was seen as an extreme danger to the security of a country already at war with foreign powers. The battles lasted from March until December 1793 and resulted in the deaths of up to one hundred thousand people, including thousands of rebels who were drowned in the Loire River.<sup>293</sup>

As an officer in the Vendean campaign, Joseph-Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo adopted an abandoned child, much like the regiment in *Quatrevingt-Treize*, whom he would later give away when his own children arrived.<sup>294</sup> During the Hundred Days, Hugo was sent to defend Thionville<sup>295</sup> against the Prussians. Upon his arrival, he received a standing ovation; indeed, when Victor Hugo visited Thionville in 1871, he found that his father was still worshipped as a

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<sup>292</sup> Victor Hugo, *Œuvres poétiques*, tome 3, ed. Pierre Albouy (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 305.

<sup>293</sup> J. F. Boshier, *The French Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1988), 192.

<sup>294</sup> Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 5

<sup>295</sup> Thionville is located near the borders of Germany and Luxembourg, giving it immense strategic importance during both the Revolution and the Franco-Prussian War.



town hero.<sup>296</sup> General Hugo held the town with ruthless efficiency until November 1815, giving him the distinction of being the final hold-out of Napoléon's Empire. In many ways, Joseph Hugo's methods serve as a model for the cold-blooded determination displayed by the Marquis de Lantenac in *Quatrevingt-Treize*; both men are single-minded in their quests to do what they believe must be done. General Hugo "flooded the moat, executed deserters, [and] ignored all messages from the outside world"<sup>297</sup> much as Lantenac holes himself up in a tower and executes anyone who jeopardizes his mission.

Unlike his initially negative, yet romanticized view of his father, Hugo idealized Sophie Trébuchet, his mother, as a "half-wild royalist Amazon, chased through the Breton undergrowth by republican soldiers, risking her life to rescue persecuted priests."<sup>298</sup> In reality, Sophie's family had actively supported the establishment of the Republic, and were more likely "to be found reading Voltaire than the Bible."<sup>299</sup> Hugo saw his mother in complete opposition to his father – she was the embodiment of Breton resistance, while his father seemed to have made his career from taking advantage of those weaker than himself.

Victor Hugo's relationship with his father underwent a complete change after 1821. In this year, both Napoléon and Hugo's mother died, leading to reconciliation with Joseph Hugo. Starting with "À mon père" (1823), many of Hugo's poems began to reflect a spirit of both national reconciliation and filial acceptance. Among the works showing a new historical perspective are "Les Deux îles" (1825), "Ode à l'Arc de Triomphe" (1826), and "À la Colonne de la Place Vendôme" (1827). In the first poem, Hugo struggles with the historical reality of Napoléon's reign, while in the latter poem, Hugo presents Napoléon as the equal of Charlemagne

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<sup>296</sup> Robb, 45.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 7.

and other kings who had made France great. From this point forward, Hugo frequently sings the praises of Napoléon and his epic history; whereas before his poetry had been monarchical, now his work became more Republican, due in large part to the ‘reinvention’ of his own personal history.

Hugo’s familial history in many ways coincided with that of France, or so he liked to believe. His mother embodied the conflict of the Vendée, while his father personified the glories and problems associated with the Revolution. In the writer’s imagination, the Hugos incarnated France in its unresolved condition: monarchy versus republic; the ongoing search for expiation for previous crimes; and the struggle between private life and public figures. Just as Hugo would have to come to terms with both sides of his family history, so too would France have to reconcile its past. One of the main themes of *Quatrevingt-Treize* is the death of ancestors and the rejection of tradition: “on exterminé en masse tout le passé.”<sup>300</sup> The novel does end, however, on an optimistic note, with the last chapter “Cependant le soleil se lève,” showing Hugo’s hope for future generations. Through the creation of works like *Quatrevingt-Treize*, Hugo hoped to give the country a literary *lieu de mémoire* to aid in this process.

The instability of eighteenth-century France is conveyed in the *A Paris* portion of *Quatrevingt-Treize*. Hugo notes the great changes in the country’s recent history: “On sort de Louis XIV comme on sort de Robespierre, avec un grand besoin de respirer; de là la Régence qui ouvre le siècle et le Directoire qui le termine. Deux saturnales après deux terrorismes.”<sup>301</sup> The Saturnalias in question, of course, refer to the ancient Roman festivals, in this case, the Regency and the Directory following the terror of Louis XIV’s absolutism and the Reign of Terror. After this comment on the country’s moments of both liberation and debauchery, Hugo goes on to

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<sup>300</sup> Victor Hugo, *Quatrevingt-Treize* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 449.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 174.

condemn Paris, in particular, for its excessive celebrations: “Après le 9 thermidor, Paris fut gai, d’une gaieté égarée. Une joie malsaine déborda. A la frénésie de mourir succéda la frénésie de vivre, et la grandeur s’éclipsa.”<sup>302</sup> Following this quote is a list of the country’s excesses, many of them extremely distasteful to the modern reader. Included in this list is a painter who depicted young girls “en guillotinnées,” meaning that they wore red chemises to appear as if they had had their throats cut, women adorning themselves in diamonds while soldiers wandered the country in bare feet, and “le marquis de Sade présidait la section des Piques, place Vendôme.”<sup>303</sup> The notorious libertine’s inclusion in this list is just another item to point to the ridiculousness of the country’s extreme reaction to recent events. Just as contemporary France would now have to resolve its own issues, Hugo reminds his audience that the previous century had already gone through a very similar situation and while régimes may have changed, the nation’s people will always survive.

Victor Hugo was increasingly involved in politics from the time he was elevated to the peerage by Louis-Philippe in 1845. He had good relations with the royal family and ties to multiple régimes, including the three revolutions in his lifetime and the first Revolution as his father’s son. During the 1848 Revolution, he rose to prominence, urging moderation in the face of tumultuous demands for bloodshed. In his only recorded speech as the eighth arrondissement’s mayor, he urged caution: “Let us not forget: ... the revolution of our fathers was great in war; yours [sic] must be great in peace. ... This is the task of the future – and in the times in which we live, the future comes quickly.”<sup>304</sup> Although Hugo was concerned about the speed with which the 1848 Revolution began, he fully sympathized with the working-class’s

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>304</sup> Victor Hugo, “Tree of Liberty speech,” 2 March 1848, cited in Robb, 266.

plight. Just three years after being made a *pair de France*, Hugo was elected as a representative by the very people who had deposed the king.

Ironically, due to personal and political ties, Victor Hugo and his family had supported the 1848 presidential campaign of Louis-Napoléon, although within weeks of the election, Hugo began to have great doubts about the régime. By December 1851, Hugo had already uttered his famous “Napoléon le Petit” comment and had fled into exile in Belgium. During the course of the Second Empire, Hugo remained abroad, in Belgium and the Channel islands of Jersey and Guernsey, not returning to France until September 1870. Ironically, starting in 1789, Guernsey had served as a place for French royalist and Catholic émigrés to gather, although few actually settled permanently on the island.<sup>305</sup> During these years in exile, Hugo would create some of his most influential works, including *Napoléon le Petit*, *Les Châtiments*, and *Les Misérables*.

Upon learning of the fall of the Second Empire on 4 September 1870, Hugo immediately left for Paris, where he was warmly hailed as a national treasure by both the citizens and the new government. Under the Third Republic, Hugo served as a representative for Paris for a short time, until his resignation in March 1871, which came in response to the Assembly’s annulment of Garibaldi’s election as a *de facto* citizen to the French National Assembly.<sup>306</sup> He returned to Paris from Bordeaux, the seat of the Assembly, just in time to bury his son Charles amidst the beginnings of the Paris Commune. Charles died of a heart attack on 13 March. His funeral procession took place on 18 March, making it the “first public ceremony of the new city state,”<sup>307</sup> while Paris prepared barricades and braced for the coming siege.

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<sup>305</sup> Gregory Stevens Cox, *St Peter Port, 1680-1830: The History of an International Entrepôt* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), 88.

<sup>306</sup> Bernard Taihe, *Citizenship and Wars: France in Turmoil, 1870-1871* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 42.

<sup>307</sup> Robb, 463.

While Hugo was in Belgium dealing with his son's estate, the new commune de Paris had turned to its historical predecessor and decided to reinstate many of the eighteenth-century Commune's habits, including the reintroduction of the Revolutionary calendar and the Terrorists' habit of arresting anyone denounced as a spy for the Ancien Régime. By the time Hugo was able to settle his son's affairs, it was too late to return to Paris, as the second siege had already begun. In an attempt to save monuments of common national heritage, Hugo appealed to both sides in the conflict in his poem "Les Deux trophées," which beseeches the Versaillais government to spare the Arc de Triomphe and the Communards to preserve the Vendôme Column. Despite his appeals from abroad, the Column was torn down, but the Arc managed to escape the government's bombardments.

Due to his continued involvement in French politics and the Belgian Parliament's assurance that any political refugees would be extradited to France, Hugo was asked to leave after having offered shelter to fellow exiles: "Even if he is my personal enemy – especially if he is my personal enemy – any Communard may knock at my door and I shall open it. In my house he will be safe. [...] I shall do Belgium this honor."<sup>308</sup> The Hugo family was forced to flee to Luxembourg, where they would spend the next four months until they could once again return to France. During both his time abroad and upon his return to France, Hugo worked tirelessly for the 1880 amnesty for former Communards. He went so far as to include the concept in his novel, *Quatrevingt-Treize*: "amnistie est pour moi le plus beau mot de la langue humaine."<sup>309</sup> With this heartfelt plea, Hugo clearly declares himself in favor of a humane and forgiving resolution to the issues facing his compatriots.

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<sup>308</sup> Robb, 467.

<sup>309</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 296.

### 3.2.1 *Quatrevingt-Treize*

*Quatrevingt-Treize* is the last novel written by Victor Hugo, and was first published in 1874, three years after the Paris Commune. The story was intended as part of a trilogy, which would include *l'Aristocratie*, *la Monarchie*, and *la Révolution*: “le vrai titre de ce livre [*L'Homme qui rit*] serait *l'Aristocratie*. Un autre livre, qui suivra, pourra être intitulé *la Monarchie*. Et ces deux livres, s'il est donné à l'auteur d'achever ce travail, en précéderont et en amèneront un autre qui sera intitulé *Quatrevingt-Treize*.”<sup>310</sup> While the “aristocracy” and “revolution” portions of the work were fulfilled by *L'Homme qui rit* and *Quatrevingt-Treize*, the “monarchy” piece was never completed. The story of *Quatrevingt-Treize* is centered around the Vendean revolt, which took place in 1793. The work itself is divided into three sections: “En mer,” “À Paris,” and “En Vendée,” with each part recounting different stories from this time period, although several of the stories intersect and overlap throughout the work.

The title of the work represents not only the year the Terror swept through France, it also marked a time of great internal and external battles. Hugo sums up the period by saying:

93 est la guerre de l'Europe contre la France et de la France contre Paris. Et qu'est-ce que la Révolution? C'est la victoire de la France sur l'Europe et de Paris sur la France. De là, l'immensité de cette minute épouvantable, 93, plus grande que tout le reste du siècle.

Rien de plus tragique, l'Europe attaquant la France et la France attaquant Paris. Drame qui a la stature de l'épopée.<sup>311</sup>

The emphasis is placed on the multiple levels of strife, with France solidly in the center of the action, caught between Europe and Paris. Paris eventually emerges as the victor in the epic struggle, although the suffering results in an “intense year,” one that overshadows the entire

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<sup>310</sup> Victor Hugo, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Yves Gohin, Roman III, preface to *L'Homme qui rit* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1985), 347.

<sup>311</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 151.

century preceding it. Of course, late nineteenth-century readers were well aware that Paris did not always triumph, but Hugo uses texts like *Quatrevingt-Treize*, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, and *Les Misérables* to restate his allegiance to the city.

The choice of a one-word title also points to specific intentions on the part of the author. The year is partial, and the reader must deduce that the number refers to 1793, rather than the end of another century. The date serves as part of a series of events, leading up to this momentous point in French history: “89, la chute de la Bastille, la fin du supplice des peuples ; 90, le 19 juin, la fin de la féodalité ; 91, Varennes, la fin de la royauté ; 92, l’avènement de la République. [...] 93 est une année intense.”<sup>312</sup> Both characters and the violence of the story come to be identified with the number: “le poing crispé de 93 avait pris le meurtrier royaliste au collet” and “Cimourdain, c’est-à-dire 93, tenait Lantenac, c’est-à-dire la monarchie.”<sup>313</sup> The figure itself is personified and becomes an active agent of history.

The public persona of Victor Hugo serves as the book’s narrator, much in the style of several of his other famous works, including *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*. He is an omniscient, omnipresent narrator, who occasionally interjects his own point of view and family history into the story. As Isabel K. Roche notes, the Hugolian narrator “very consciously swings back and forth between moments of omniscience and lapses in this omniscience which undermine the narrative voice and distance the author from his creations.”<sup>314</sup> At multiple points, a historical distance is established between the events in the novel and the present: “aujourd’hui elle [la Convention] est en perspective, et elle dessine sur le ciel profond, dans un lointain serein

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>314</sup> Isabel K. Roche, “Inscribing His Ideal Reader(ship): Victor Hugo and the Shaping of *le lecteur pensif*,” *French Forum* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2003), 27.

et tragique, l'immense profil de la révolution française.”<sup>315</sup> Later in the novel, he describes the summary executions committed by the Vendéans: “Nous avons revu ces mœurs. [...] La terreur répliquait à la terreur.”<sup>316</sup> For readers in 1874, this section would clearly call to mind the treatment of the Communards at the hands of the Versaillais government.

Hugo sets himself up as an authoritative source, stating: “cette guerre, mon père l’a faite, et j’en puis parler.”<sup>317</sup> Hugo’s “je” and the mention of a heroic father serve as faithful guarantees of the story’s historical veracity. Of course, he did not rely solely on his familial history to establish his authority on the Revolution; rather, Hugo did exhaustive research, visiting battlefields, reading histories, and pouring over personal accounts. As a historically informed and biased narrator, Hugo interprets history for his reader. He sees himself as a mediator for French History, unlike other nineteenth-century writers whose narrative styles were much less intrusive in their storylines. Gustave Flaubert and Honoré de Balzac, for example, wrote historically based tales, but their narrators are not given any sort of overt interaction with the story or the reader. The reader is forewarned, however, that Hugo will be heavily involved in interpreting both the text and History. The title alone, with its distinctive spelling, points more to a mythical or invented story than to a historically accurate account of events.<sup>318</sup> The narrative tale is blended into the historical framework of the novel, incorporating both fictional and factual details.

In his in-depth study of the relation between text and history, Sandy Petrey points out that *Quatrevingt-Treize* cannot be considered purely as a historical novel. According to him, the

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<sup>315</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 193.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>318</sup> The accepted spelling by the nineteenth century was *quatre-vingt-treize*, but Hugo chose an older spelling to pay homage to his eighteenth-century Vendean subject. See Victor Brombert, “Opening Signals in Narrative,” *New Literary History* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1980), 501.



novel's true purpose is to show the "moral potential" of a country, no matter what the historical circumstance:

*Quatrevingt-Treize* is clearly a historical novel in the normal use of the term to designate a work set in a period prior to the author's own. If we consider history more than chronology, however, this work should in fact be classified as *antihistorical*. It employs a multitude of codes to convey the single message that human beings must refuse the imperatives put by *historical* existence in order to realize their full *moral* potential.<sup>319</sup>

Removing the chronological setting allows the reader to focus on Hugo's true message, that of familial endurance in the face of traumatic events. Family ultimately triumphs over every other consideration in the novel, including revenge, political ideology, and sense of duty. Petrey notes that Hugo "extracts" his characters from the historical context in which he places them.<sup>320</sup> The historical portion of the story does not truly advance; the book begins with the counterrevolutionary struggle, and ends with the continuation of the same conflict. On the other hand, the familial storyline advances: the mother separated from her children is reunited with them, and the struggle in the Lantenac family group is resolved, albeit it in a tragic manner.

According to Petrey, *Quatrevingt-Treize* provides an "escape from the cataclysm of 1870-71," while at the same time, it "captures the feel of historical situation, the exhilaration and imperfection of a mass refusing all that had existed before to make and name a previously unimaginable world."<sup>321</sup> In this sense, the work serves as an allegory for the chaos of the Commune, but it goes beyond the history of the moment to look at humanity. Both the Terror and the Commune become social laboratories, in which humanity is tested under horrific conditions. For Hugo, what emerges, and what must be encouraged for the country's future, is man's innate need to protect the future generation.

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<sup>319</sup> Petrey, 13.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>321</sup> Petrey, 105.

The novel begins with the Bonnet Rouge, a battalion of Revolutionary soldiers, discovering a young mother and her children, who are fleeing the destruction caused by the unrelenting battles waged around them. The family is adopted by the battalion, but they will come in contact with the leaders of both the Revolutionary and the counterrevolutionary forces in the region. It is interesting to note that although the *bonnet rouge* was one of the quintessential symbols for the Revolutionaries, the cap itself had been in existence since the seventeenth-century. In 1675, it became the symbol for rioters in Bretagne who were protesting Colbert's latest taxes. During Revolutionary times, the Bonnet Rouge was also the name of a section in what is today Paris's fifteenth arrondissement. It is from this part of the city whence comes Hugo's battalion. The Section du Bonnet Rouge requested that the Commune de Paris adopt the cap as part of state vestments for government officials,<sup>322</sup> although delineating the population by means of dress seems to go against the very idea of *égalité* and *fraternité*. In the story, the Bonnet Rouge thus becomes a shared national *lieu de mémoire*, associated with anti-revolutionary rebellion in Bretagne, as well as with the Revolutionary soldiers who would see the Vendéans crushed. By 1874, references like this were needed to represent the common heritage of the French Republic.

The commander of the Bleus is a young nobleman, Gauvain, who grew up in the area and has joined the Revolution after studying in Paris. His rival in the upcoming battle is the patriarch of his family, his uncle the Marquis de Lantenac. Lantenac has returned from exile in England to lead the crown's troops to regain a foothold in the Vendée. Both men will do their best to destroy the other, sacrificing their own soldiers and executing anyone who gives aid to the enemy. By the end of the book, however, both men will be led by their consciences to do the

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<sup>322</sup> Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances: Representations of Dress in Revolutionary France* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 158-159.

right thing and they will each sacrifice themselves for the greater good – in this case, the sanctity of family. Even though the narrator is clearly on the side of the Revolutionaries, the Royalists are portrayed as honorable men facing the same difficult decisions as their counterparts.

Written just after the fall of the Paris Commune, *Quatrevingt-Treize* contains many pointed references to current events and how history seems to be repeating itself yet again. The Vendôme Column and its destruction under the auspices of painter Gustave Courbet during the Paris Commune of 1871 had become a national scandal. Hugo points out in his novel that this was not the first time the monument had been toppled for political reasons. In its place in 1792 had been a statue of Louis XIV: “cette statue de Louis XIV avait été cent ans debout ; elle avait été érigée 12 août 1692, elle fut renversée le 12 août 1792.”<sup>323</sup> The statue of the king suffered the same fate as the future statues of Napoléon I, a fleur-de-lis, and a second reincarnation of Napoléon I, all toppled and restored under various régimes by the time the story was written. The original Napoléon I statue was melted down and made into the Henri IV statue that still graces the Pont Neuf in Paris.

By including this particular monument in his list of artwork destroyed by the Revolution, Hugo is calling his reader’s attention to the similarities between the two époques. Of course, in the eighteenth century, it was radical Terrorists who had torn down the statue, while conservative pacifists in the Commune were the ones to tear down the Column in 1871. The terror of the Commune was, in turn, picked up and repeated by the conservative government, which was by now under Prussian influence. Through its actions, like the restoration of the Column and the suppression of political opponents, the government was merely restaging many of the policies

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<sup>323</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 152.

undertaken by the original eighteenth-century Terrorists. These historical repetitions aided the changing of national memory toward the eighteenth-century Revolution.

The various characters present in *Quatrevingt-Treize* represent amalgams of Revolutionary types. Lantenac, an implacable and unforgiving nobleman, is the Vendée's only hope of maintaining a successful uprising. The Marquis is surrounded by mystery and is slowly, but never completely, revealed to the reader. Lantenac's physical appearance is equally contradictory, making it difficult to describe him in precise detail:

C'était un haut vieillard, droit et robuste, à figure sévère, dont il eût été difficile de préciser l'âge, parce qu'il semblait à la fois vieux et jeune ; un de ces hommes qui sont pleins d'années et de force, qui ont des cheveux blancs sur le front et un éclair dans le regard ; quarante ans pour la vigueur et quatre-vingts ans pour l'autorité.<sup>324</sup>

Despite his obvious age, the reader is left with the impression that this man is more than capable of taking on the opposing armies and leading his own troops to victory. The Marquis' presence serves to calm and inspire those around him, and his very name becomes a rallying cry for the troops, "un nom répété par mille voix [...] 'Lantenac! Lantenac! Le marquis de Lantenac!' C'était lui qu'on cherchait."<sup>325</sup> This battle cry comes from a savage band of Vendean soldiers, who look upon the Marquis with a sort of "sauvage amour"<sup>326</sup> and who have amassed based on rumors of his arrival.

The Marquis de Lantenac serves as the leading voice in the monarchist struggle, and, consequently, as the Revolutionaries' main enemy. In battle, he is relentless and completely without pity, killing his own men for any infractions that could endanger their mission. Of course, the royalist soldiers are so devoted to him that even the brother of one of the executed sailors becomes his most devoted bodyguard. The Marquis is completely inflexible in his morals

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 127.

and his sense of duty. When questioned about the fate of prisoners taken during battle, he responds in a very concise and straightforward manner: “Que faut-il faire des blessés ? – Achevez-les. – Que faut-il faire des prisonniers ? – Fusillez-les. – Il y en a environ quatre-vingts. – Fusillez tout. – Il y a deux femmes. – Aussi.” However, in a rare moment of compassion, Lantenac shows clemency to three of the prisoners: “Il y a trois enfants. – Emmenez-les. On verra ce qu’on en fera.”<sup>327</sup> The children in question will prove to be the catalyst that will drive the rest of the story, both for the Monarchists and the Revolutionaries.

Lantenac serves in many ways as the incarnation of the authority of the Ancien Régime. He is older and demonstrates an almost obsessive devotion to tradition. The sailors are at first unable to recognize him as a noble commander because he insists on wearing peasant-style garb, which allows him to pass among the Vendéans. His representation of the Ancien Régime contrasts with the vitality displayed by contemporary historical figures, but it is impossible to dismiss him or the tradition with which he is associated. By 1874, it was time to assume the entirety of France’s past, no matter which political régime currently ruled. With Lantenac’s escape, made possible only by Gauvain’s sacrifice in taking his place in prison, the Ancien Régime continues in fact and in memory, leading the characters and the readers to assume this part of the country’s past. For many Frenchmen, and most particularly in the Vendée, the advent of the Revolution did not necessarily dictate the end of support for the monarchy and the Church. The support and devotion shown to the Marquis demonstrate the ongoing power of tradition in the face of a new tide of Revolutionary thought.

Lantenac’s main opponent in *Quatrevingt-Treize* is the leader of the Revolutionary forces, Gauvain, a young captain and the Marquis’ own grand-nephew. Gauvain’s name most

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 131.

likely comes from Hugo's mistress, Juliette Drouet, whose real name was Julienne-Joséphine Gauvain. The name is also that of one of the Knights of the Round Table, Arthur's nephew Gauvain. Hugo's depiction of the Revolutionary soldier certainly bears out the romantic attachments associated with the name. Gauvain is described as in contrasting terms:

Gauvain avait trente ans, une encolure d'Hercule, l'œil sérieux d'un prophète et le rire d'un enfant. Il ne fumait pas, il ne buvait pas, il ne jurait pas. Il emportait à travers la guerre un nécessaire de toilette ; il avait grand soin de ses ongles, de ses dents, de ses cheveux qui étaient bruns et superbes [...]. Sa voix très douce avait à propos les éclats brusques du commandement. [...] C'était une âme héroïque et innocente. Le sabre au poing le transfigurait. Il avait cet air efféminé qui dans la bataille est formidable.<sup>328</sup>

His effeminate appearance is in direct contrast with his military prowess, but his physical description was most likely a tribute to Hugo's mistress, whose appearance could be described in the same terms. Gauvain proves to be a formidable opponent for the Vendean uprising, but his very goodness and natural compassion will prove to be his downfall.

Although the figure of a military opponent is necessary to battle with Lantenac, Gauvain does not really exist in his own terms. He is always described in terms of his relation to other characters: he is the grand-nephew of Lantenac, the former pupil of Cimourdain, a military leader, and protector for his men. He is set in opposition to Lantenac's political and moral beliefs, just as he is opposed to Cimourdain's ruthless cruelty. As a member of Lantenac's family, he also represents part of a Vendean family torn apart by the Revolution.

On the other side of Gauvain is Cimourdain, who represents the young man's spiritual father. Hired as a tutor for the young boy, Cimourdain quickly grew to regard Gauvain as his own son, raising him with a love for liberty and republican ideals. Cimourdain is a former village priest, whose parents chose religion as his path to greatness. After receiving a small inheritance, he quickly leaves religious life and devotes himself heart and soul to the Revolution.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 262.

He is easily recognized for his commitment and ruthless efficiency and begins working directly for the Committee of Public Safety. Much as in Louis de Bruno's *Lioncel*, the meetings between the Committee and its agent are dark and disturbing, hinting at the precarious nature of its dealings. When concerns arise about Gauvain's ability to lead his troops and to carry out his mission in the Vendée, it is Cimourdain who is chosen to counterbalance him: "vous aurez de l'ascendant sur lui, ayant le double de son âge. Il faut le diriger, mais le ménager."<sup>329</sup> Gauvain will be given control, but only with Cimourdain's rabid republicanism to balance his natural compassion.

Cimourdain himself can be read as an allegory of the Terror. Well-meaning, but filled with often violent rage, both the character and the movement do what they must to accomplish their goals in the name of the greater good. Hoping to guide his former protégé to greatness, Cimourdain places all of his skills at the young man's disposal:

Il y avait en Cimourdain deux hommes, un homme tendre, et un homme sombre ; tous deux étaient contents ; car, l'inexorable étant son idéal, en même temps qu'il voyait Gauvain superbe, il le voyait terrible. Cimourdain pensait à tout ce qu'il fallait détruire avant de construire, et, certes, se disait-il, ce n'est pas l'heure des attendrissements. Gauvain sera « à la hauteur, » mot du temps. Cimourdain se figurait Gauvain écrasant du pied les ténèbres, cuirassé de lumière, avec une lueur de météore au front, ouvrant les grandes ailes idéales de la justice, de la raison et du progrès, et une épée à la main ; ange, mais exterminateur.<sup>330</sup>

Cimourdain, a true Terrorist, is more than willing to sacrifice everything for the vision of a new world order, even if that means turning his beloved pupil into an instrument of destruction.

Lantenac, Cimourdain, and Gauvain are all deeply devoted to their causes, but have vastly different motivations. Saving and preserving the glory of the monarchy are the most important goals for Lantenac, while Cimourdain and Gauvain struggle to support the newly

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<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 281.

birthed Republic. Although Cimourdain is entirely ruthless in the pursuit of his goals, Gauvain tempers his quest with compassion and humanism. Explaining the differences between their views of the Republic, Gauvain finds that Cimourdain's Republic "dose, mesure et règle l'homme ; la mienne l'emporte en plein azur ; c'est la différence qu'il y a entre un théorème et un aigle."<sup>331</sup> In Gauvain's ideal Republic, the eagle triumphs over the cold, harsh theories associated with that of Cimourdain. Hugo's use of imperial imagery in the eagle can scarcely be seen as anything other than a favorable comment on Napoléon's 'redeeming' of the Revolution. After the chaos associated with the Revolution, and more specifically, the Terror, Napoléon's seizure of power allowed him to consolidate the country and to restore much of France's former glory. The comment can also be read as a criticism of the vast differences between the empires of Napoléon Ier and Napoléon III. The nephew's empire was widely criticized as a régime which sold its favors and elevated unworthy men through shady business dealings, while the First Empire was known for its promotion of men of merit, regardless of their background.

The triad of characters also serves as an analogy for the end of the Revolution. If Gauvain is seen as representing the best of the Revolution, and Lantenac is the Ancien Régime, then Cimourdain can be seen as nothing other than the Terror responsible for ending both preceding régimes. After Gauvain has been condemned to death by Cimourdain's deciding vote, the two men discuss the true importance of the Revolution. For Cimourdain, laws are founded on the principles of mankind's intrinsic rights: "il faut que le droit entre dans la loi ; et, quand le droit s'est fait loi, il est absolu. C'est là ce que j'appelle le possible."<sup>332</sup> Because he believes so strongly in the law's ideological foundations, Cimourdain has no choice but to condemn his adopted 'son' to death for failing the Republic.

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 470.



Although he never fully explains his decision, the anguish he feels torn between his loyalty to the Revolution and his love for Gauvain is evident in the descriptions of Cimourdain's expressions. After pronouncing his vote in favor of death, he is described as a tortured soul: "Son visage exprimait la torture du triomphe sinistre. Quand Jacob dans les ténèbres se fit béni par l'ange qu'il avait terrassé, il devait avoir ce sourire effrayant."<sup>333</sup> His fanatical devotion to his cause and to his 'son' are also seen when he visits him in prison: "Cimourdain avec des yeux pleins de ces flammes qui brûlent les larmes."<sup>334</sup> Despite these evidences of strong emotion, Cimourdain never justifies his choices to Gauvain, preferring instead to question him in an attempt to understand the younger man's reasons.

When Gauvain is sentenced to death for failing to kill his grand-uncle, Cimourdain, as the official representative of the Terrorist government, denies pleas to lift the order of execution. The Terror, thus, has killed the potential of the Revolution. Unable to survive the execution of his 'son,' Cimourdain shoots himself as the blade of the guillotine descends on Gauvain. The Republic has literally shot itself due to its unwavering fanaticism. Both men seemingly die as a result of their duty for the Republic, but in reality, they die because of Cimourdain's obsession with following the letter of the law.

In addition to the three main characters of the novel, Hugo also expends quite a bit of effort on introducing important secondary characters. Foremost among these figures are the Fléchards, a family fleeing the destruction caused by the battles in Bretagne. The family has been destroyed by the wars, and all that remains is Michelle Fléchard and her three young children. They had been fleeing from their ruined home in Azé (today, Château-Gontier) when they were discovered by the Bonnet Rouge battalion. As we will see later in more depth, Mme

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 462.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 465.

Flécharde does not fully understand what is happening to her or to the country. The only thing that matters is the safety of her children. She remains unaware of the historical forces that are shaping her life and guiding her actions, much like Gauvain is unable to see that his decisions have already been determined by his familial and societal background.

Throughout the novel, the children will serve as prods to the main characters' consciences, guiding them to do what is right, rather than merely to serve their duty. The Flécharde children are extremely young, and consequently, they bring pure innocence to a novel that is filled with men's need for power and control. Ironically, though, it is the children who perhaps best represent the Revolution and its subsequent Terror. In an unforgettable scene, the three children have been left alone in a library and are amusing themselves by playing with the books. The violence and innocence present in the scene are inextricably mixed together in the children's play. Due to boredom and curiosity, they stumble on a Saint Bartholomew story and begin to tear it to pieces, each sharing in the destruction and desecration of the book: "Georgette déchira son grand morceau en deux petits, puis les deux petits en quatre, si bien que l'histoire pourrait dire que saint Barthélemy, après avoir été écorché en Arménie, fut écartelé en Bretagne."<sup>335</sup> The children have thus become executioners, destroying both the physical book and its representation of history. The term *écartèlement* refers to the punishment handed out for crimes against royalty, when criminals were drawn and quartered, just as the book itself ends up in four pieces.

The choice of subject matter is also important to understanding this key scene in the novel. Saint Bartholomew was one of the original apostles and was martyred in Armenia. He was flayed alive and beheaded. His body was later found washed up on Lipari, a small island off

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 342.

the coast of Sicily. When the men of the island tried to lift his body, they failed because the body was too heavy. However, the children of the island were easily able to bring him to shore. In art, the Saint is often portrayed as holding a book or a tanner's knife and a human skin.<sup>336</sup> Bartholomew is thus a perfect choice for this scene, since he is associated with children, books, and skinning objects.

Hugo uses violent and dark terms associated with events like the Terror to illustrate the scene: "déchirure," "le carnage," "comme du premier sang versé," and "effrayant." He then describes the moment immediately following the destruction in terms of a battle:

Il y eut un instant de silence et de terreur, la victoire a ses effrois. Les trois enfants se prirent les mains et se tinrent à distance, considérant le vaste volume démantelé. Mais après un peu de rêverie, Gros-Alain s'approcha énergétiquement et lui donna un coup de pied.<sup>337</sup>

Even after the book has been destroyed, the eldest child still feels the need to give a final blow to its 'corpse.' Hugo found this disturbing episode to be so important that he dedicated an entire book to it (livre troisième de la troisième partie), one of only two books to contain only one chapter. The children incarnate the senseless violence of the Terror, but are tempered with the purity associated with childhood innocence. Apart from this moment of animalistic behavior, there is nothing in the novel to suggest that the children will become the ferocious animals we have just glimpsed. The scene's importance comes, rather, from the sense of *violence irréfléchie* associated with both the Terror and the Commune, a sort of destructive chaos to be avoided through the education of future generations.

The children in *Quatrevingt-Treize* represent the future and, thus, the potential of France. This concept of children as the hope for the future is present throughout many of Hugo's works.

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<sup>336</sup> Rosemary Ellen Guiley, ed, *The Encyclopedia of Saints* (New York: Facts on File, 2001) s.v. "Bartholomew the Apostle."

<sup>337</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 344.

In a very famous example, Cosette functions as a sort of historical bridge in *Les Misérables*, a link between Jean Valjean's past and present, as well as the promise for future generations in the face of wartime turmoil. Hugo felt that he had a sort of historical mission to instill a sense of responsibility in adults and to lead them to think about the ramifications for their actions. In *Quatrevingt-Treize* this ideal is easily seen in the lead characters' willingness to sacrifice themselves, and ultimately, their political missions, to save the lives of the Flécharde children.

The last group of secondary characters necessary to the story, aside from the various military units, is the Terrorists themselves. Hugo has chosen Danton, Robespierre, and Marat as his political triumvirate, limiting the novel's action to the period between April and August 1793.<sup>338</sup> Interestingly, these powerful men are relegated to relatively small parts in the novel. They will pull many of the strings, but their only importance is the impact they might have on the main characters' lives. The three men are portrayed a bit like the animals seen in Louis de Bruno's *Lioncel* (1800), although Hugo is more likely to compare them to mythical monsters than Bruno's rabid creatures. In two examples taken from classical mythology, Hugo compares the triumvirate to ancient beasts of destruction. They are first compared to Cerberus, the fierce hound of Hades:

- [Marat :] Prenons la dictature, à nous trois nous représentons la Révolution. Nous sommes les trois têtes de Cerbère. De ces trois têtes, l'une parle, c'est vous, Robespierre ; l'autre rugit, c'est vous, Danton...
- L'autre mord, dit Danton, c'est vous Marat.
- Toutes trois mordent, dit Robespierre.<sup>339</sup>

It is striking to see that the men willingly identify themselves with this monstrous creature, admitting that they all play a part and that "all three bite."

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<sup>338</sup> The Committee of Public Safety, which is mentioned by name in the novel, was established on 6 April 1793 and Jean-Paul Marat was assassinated by Charlotte Corday on 13 July 1793. The one glaring inconsistency with this timeline is the Battle of Dol, which took place in November 1793, rather than in July, as Hugo describes.

<sup>339</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 173.

A few pages later, the men are compared to both Titans and the Hydra: “ces titans rentrèrent un moment chacun dans sa pensée. Les lions s’inquiètent des hydres.”<sup>340</sup> The first reference sets up their power, but also their fallibility. The Titans had been overthrown by the Olympians, leading to their imprisonments and deaths. On the other hand, aligning the men with the Hydra shows them to be harmful and dangerous creatures. Both Cerberus and the Hydra were merciless animals, known for their acidic saliva and poisonous breath. It can be no coincidence that Hugo chose monsters that could kill with their exhalations as symbols for the virulent Terrorist triumvirate, who killed with their speeches and proclamations.

In *Quatrevingt-Treize*, the Revolutionaries’ interactions reveal a frantic need to save the Republic from any enemies, internal or external, rather than Bruno’s portrayal of senseless violence. During a meeting in which the fictional triumvirate was discussing security measures, Danton exclaims: “il n’y a qu’une urgence, la République en danger. Je ne connais qu’une chose, délivrer la France de l’ennemi. Pour cela tous les moyens sont bons. [...] Pas de demi-mesures. Pas de prudence en révolution. [...] Ecrasons l’ennemi.” Robespierre’s quiet but immediate response to this impassioned speech is “je veux bien.”<sup>341</sup> Marat remains noticeably silent during the argument of just where to find this enemy, only stepping in to calm and correct his cohorts: “calmez-vous [...] il est partout; et vous êtes perdus.”<sup>342</sup> Even though he is the voice of ‘reason’ in this scene, Marat, in reality is telling his cohorts that they are surrounded by enemies and that they are effectively “lost.”

The grumblings and discussions continue for many pages, with multiple sly references as to the future fate of the three men: “La guillotine est une vierge ; on se couche sur elle, on ne la

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 177.

féconde pas. – Qu'en savez-vous ? répliqua Danton, je la féconderais, moi ! – Nous verrons, dit Marat. Et il sourit.”<sup>343</sup> It is only the arrival of Cimourdain, with his words of wisdom about the overwhelming need to accomplish what must be done for the good of the Republic, which finally calms the group enough to proceed with the business at hand. Later, when Marat enters the Convention, a reference is immediately made to his medicinal use of baths:

- Mon médecin me commande les bains, répondit Marat.
- Il faut se défier des bains, reprit Chabot ; Sénèque est mort dans un bain.
- Marat sourit : Chabot, il n'y a pas ici de Néron.
- Il y a toi, dit une voix rude.<sup>344</sup>

The “voix rude” belongs to Danton, who is passing by as the other men speak. The dialogue refers to Roman emperor Nero, who had ordered the death of his former tutor, Seneca, for his alleged part in an assassination plot. Seneca was first ordered to die by slitting his wrists in a bath, but did not die by this method and had to resort to poison.<sup>345</sup> Hugo uses these exchanges once again to foreshadow the men’s impending deaths. Both men will be dead within a year of the conversations recounted in the story, historical knowledge which Hugo easily incorporates into his tale. While almost all of the Revolutionaries in the story die, Lantenac and the Flécharde family will emerge to enjoy their futures.

### 3.2.2 *Quatrevingt-Treize* as Didactic Novel

Within *Quatrevingt-Treize*, Hugo plays with certain terms and ideas used during the eighteenth century, but which were of extreme importance and relevance during the Franco-Prussian War and its aftermath. Much as the Marquis de Sade and Louis de Bruno make use of terms like

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>345</sup> Miriam Griffin, “Philosophy, Cato, and Roman Suicide,” *Greece and Rome*, xxxiii, no. 1 (April 1986): 65.

*liberté, honnête homme, sans-culottes*, and *patriote*, so too does Hugo bring into play Revolutionary language. While Sade appropriated new terms for his own idiosyncratic ideology, Bruno used the words to express his disdain for the Revolution's effect on society. Hugo, however, uses the words purely for historical accuracy. When the Convention hurls imprecations at suspected traitors, "Conspirateur ! – Assassin ! – Scélérat ! – Factieux ! – Modéré !" are the terms used. *Modéré* is, of course, the word that stands out to the modern reader as a term lacking in insult, just as it would to contemporaries of Hugo. However, the terms used must be understood in their historical context, a moment when seeming to be less than committed to Terrorist policies could result in a person's death.

Foremost among these terms was the idea of *la patrie*, first introduced novel's opening scene. At the beginning of the novel, Michelle Fléchard and her children have been discovered by the Bonnet Rouge battalion, a group of soldiers mainly from Paris. The soldiers question the woman about her *patrie*, a word she obviously does not understand: "Quelle est ta patrie ? – Je ne sais pas. – Comment, tu ne sais pas quel est ton pays ? – Ah, mon pays. Si fait."<sup>346</sup> It is not until she hears the word *pays* that she is able to answer the question. However, when she gives her answer, Siscoignard, she is told "ce n'est pas une patrie, ça," to which she replies "c'est mon pays."<sup>347</sup> The dialogue that follows this response shows just how far apart the two concepts of *patrie* are: "Je comprends, monsieur. Vous êtes de France, moi je suis de Bretagne. – Eh bien? – Ce n'est pas le même pays. – Mais c'est la même patrie !"<sup>348</sup> Her incomprehension of the term portrays a common problem facing the Revolution – the populace of each region thought of itself as belonging to local political structures, rather than a part of France. For Michelle

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<sup>346</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 37.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

Fléhard, *pays* meant the land of her ancestors, while the Republican soldiers understood *patrie* as a patriotic term designating all of France, one and indivisible. Hugo sums up this distinction much later in the novel, by stating: “Pays, Patrie, ces deux mots résument toute la guerre de Vendée ; querelle de l’idée locale contre l’idée universelle ; paysans contre patriotes.”<sup>349</sup> Although he does not really judge the validity of one idea versus another, Hugo seems to present the peasants in a slightly less favorable light, as good people, but in need of patriotic education.

Michelle Fléhard accepts the differences between her terminology and that of the soldiers as a by-product of their individual backgrounds. The fact that the battalion is from Paris is at first extremely frightening to her: “Vous voyez, madame, nous sommes des Parisiens, dit gracieusement la vivandière. – La femme joignit les mains et cria : O mon Dieu seigneur Jésus !”<sup>350</sup> However, given the battalion’s kindness toward her family and her inability to control the events around her, Michelle Fléhard quickly comes to rely on the soldiers of the Bonnet Rouge, despite their ‘foreign’ background and manners. While the peasants’ reactions to Parisians are often humorous, they also provide insight into the longtime divisions within the country. By the late nineteenth century, most of these divisions were well on the way to being eradicated.<sup>351</sup> The lessening of regional differences did not mean that perfect national unity had been achieved. As mentioned earlier, Paris was widely criticized for its independent actions during the Franco-Prussian War, leading to feelings of distrust and resentment on both sides.

Acknowledging the value of the capital, during both historical and contemporary conflicts, Hugo places the Parisian chapter, “À Paris,” as the pivotal center of the book, between the “En Mer” and “En Vendée” chapters. The city is described as more than just the center of

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>351</sup> See Eugen Weber’s seminal work on the subject, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).



governmental power; rather, it is seen as the emotional core of the country: “Paris, étant le lieu où bat le cœur des peuples.”<sup>352</sup> In addition to the city’s importance to France, its very existence is seen as crucial to civilization in general: “C’est ainsi que Paris va et vient; il est l’énorme pendule de la civilisation”<sup>353</sup> Through grandiose statements like these, Hugo goes to great effort to reinforce the importance of the capital in the minds of his fellow Frenchmen. The significance of the city is also noted in several other Hugolian dramas, including *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*. However, given the city’s contemporary status and its state of disrepair after the War, Hugo was undoubtedly trying to remind people of the city’s patriotic and sentimental importance by giving it a role equal to that of the human characters in the story.

The last notable historical reference in the story comes with the repeated mentions of Prussian invasions. Prussia was indeed a powerful enemy for Revolutionary France, but its overwhelming presence in *Quatrevingt-Treize* is hard to explain in a mere eighteenth-century context. Prussia was only one of several important nations allied against the First Republic, but apart from England, it is the only country mentioned in the novel as a threat. Historically speaking, Prussia was a very dangerous enemy for France, but the countries’ recent interactions would have resonated strongly in readers, lending an added contemporary urgency to the textual battles.

*Quatrevingt-Treize* contains many scenes wherein Hugo tries to instruct, either through the tuition given his characters, or through direct lessons for the reader. The characters learn about the new political and moral order from each other and from decrees handed down by the government. Michelle Fléchard and her children are exposed to the Revolution only because of their desperate flight from their home. Gauvain has learned much at the feet of his former tutor,

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<sup>352</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 153.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

but his lessons in humanity come both from his family and his experiences on the battlefield. Many characters will learn about their true nature only when confronted with the horror that is war.

As already seen in Chapter One, one of the most powerful teaching tools for the Revolution was terror itself. Fear and indoctrination serve to motivate both those in power and the people they control. In the case of the Marquis de Lantenac, it is the awe and fear he inspires in his subordinates that will allow him to proceed toward his goal. By ruthlessly enforcing a strict discipline and following his own personal code of ethics, he is able to win the devotion of the most unlikely of allies. Early in the novel, Lantenac has been aided by Tellmarch, a beggar who is unaware of the true purpose of his arrival in Bretagne. Although he never lies to the man, Lantenac is careful never to reveal his intent. Tellmarch offers his help, on one condition: “Oui, je vous sauve, monseigneur. [...] A une condition. – Laquelle ? – C’est que vous ne venez pas ici pour faire le mal. – Je viens ici pour faire le bien, dit le marquis.”<sup>354</sup> Of course, Tellmarch soon learns to his dismay just what the Marquis is capable of; he has ordered the massacre of the entire Bonnet Rouge battalion and their adopted family. Almost everyone is killed, and the children in question have been taken hostage. With deep regret, Tellmarch can only respond to this senseless violence “si j’avais su!”<sup>355</sup> Despite any feelings of allegiance Tellmarch might have felt toward the seigneur of his homeland, it is clear that he not only regrets helping him, but that he may well lament not killing him when he had the chance. The cold-hearted terror Lantenac goes on to inflict will showcase the violence of this time throughout the novel.

Interestingly, the most heinous acts of violence are committed not by the Terrorists or the Revolutionary soldiers; rather, it is the Royalists led by Lantenac who will stray the farthest from

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 138.

their humanity. Throughout the novel, Hugo highlights the inhumanity of this violence, with chapters entitled “Pas de grâce (mot d’ordre de la Commune), Pas de quartier (mot d’ordre des princes)” and “Titans contre géants.” These titles hint at the similarities between the sides, as well their implacability. “Pas de grâce” and “pas de quartier” are originally naval terms, meaning that no prisoners would be taken and nothing would be ceded, respectively. This chapter serves as the end of the “En mer” section of the novel, making the title particularly a propos. “Titans” carries with it the connotation of fratricide, the exact pain that tore France apart during the Vendean conflict.

In addition to descriptions of moments of great cruelty toward mankind, Hugo relies on the omnipresent importance of spectacle during the Revolution. Many moments of dramatic tension are described in theatrical terms, typical for Hugo, but also a common stylistic device for the Terrorists. From the time the Marquis lands in Bretagne, there is a continuous sound of tocsins preparing the countryside for war. It is eventually learned that the drums are being used to call together his Vendean army, but the same sound will be repeated throughout the book as a call to arms for both sides. The dramatic tension created by the ominous sound always culminates in terrifying silences that mark the prelude to bloody battles.

The central battle of the novel takes place at the Lantenac/Gauvain fortress, La Tourgue. Through a series of dramatic and sometimes farcical events, the two armies end up at this heavily symbolic location to stage the pivotal battle between the protagonists. By describing in minute detail what events led to this battle and which choices caused the outcome, Hugo is clearly showing the reader how individuals can greatly influence events normally beyond their control. In a seemingly comic aside, Hugo relates the story of a group of peasants who believe that they

are stopping a convoy with a guillotine. Instead, they find a group of soldiers escorting a long ladder:

Tiens, s'écria le chef, ce n'est pas la guillotine. C'est une échelle.  
La charrette avait en effet pour tout chargement une longue échelle. [...]  
C'est égal, dit le chef, une échelle escortée est suspecte. Cela allait du côté de Parigné.  
C'était pour l'escalade de la Tourgue, bien sûr.  
Brûlons l'échelle, crièrent les paysans.  
Et ils brûlèrent l'échelle.<sup>356</sup>

This comedy of errors will nearly end in a horrific loss of life. The guillotine the peasants had hoped to stop continued to its destination via another route, arriving safely to continue the executions, including that of Gauvain. The relatively harmless ladder was intended to help the siege at La Tourgue, and its absence nearly costs the Marquis, Gauvain, and the Flécharde children their lives. Through their misguided attempts to help, the peasants are nearly responsible for the deaths of their leader and three innocent children. The moment can easily be read as a parody of Terrorist politics, in which the masses tried to gain control, without truly understanding the consequences of their actions.

A final noteworthy moment of spectacle comes during the descriptions of the Convention in Paris. When recounting the debates between the Montagnards and the Girondins, Hugo captures all the chaos and grandeur associated with the assembly. In a series of short, abrupt sentences at the beginning of the *livre troisième*, Hugo describes the Convention in awe-filled terms:

Nous approchons de la grande cime.  
Voici la Convention.  
Le regard devient fixe en présence de ce sommet.  
Jamais rien de plus haut n'est apparu sur l'horizon des hommes.  
Il y a l'Himalaya et il a la Convention.  
La Convention est peut-être le point culminant de l'histoire.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 192.

By using the pronoun “nous,” Hugo immediately draws the reader in with him to approach the pinnacle of Revolutionary power, the Convention that decided the fate of everyone from the King to Robespierre. The majority of this section serves as a history lesson for the reader, reminding him of just how powerful this group of men was in determining the course of French history. There is almost no dialogue until the very end, when Marat and several others discuss how to proceed with problems of discipline in the Vendée. As a result of their brief discussion, Marat will go to the Committee of Public Safety to demand enforcement of the law that makes clemency toward the enemy punishable by death. It is due to this renewal of the decree that Gauvain will be killed.

### **3.2.3 Fear and Domination in *Quatrevingt-Treize***

Fear is one of the dominant themes that emerge in Hugo’s *Quatrevingt-Treize*. Michelle Fléchard is motivated solely by fear for her family. The Bonnet Rouge battalion stumbles on the mother and her children in a suspected ambush, but what they actually find is a terrified woman trying to protect her family from events she does not understand. Hugo describes her as a woman surrounded by fierce soldiers: “stupéfaite, effarée, pétrifiée, regardait autour d’elle, comme à travers un rêve, ces fusils, ces sabres, ces bayonnettes, ces faces farouches.”<sup>358</sup> She is completely unaware of the political turmoil raging around her, to the point that she is unable to answer even the most basic of questions about her home or where her family lines up on the political spectrum. The only thing she can understand is that her children are hungry and she is afraid and uncertain of the chaos that has destroyed her home and forced her to flee her native

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 35.

Bretagne. Ironically, it is this obvious innocence that leads the battalion to adopt the family, drawing the Fléchards into the political conflicts of which they had previously been unaware.

Hugo also uses fear as a defining characteristic of the novel's leading monarchist, the Marquis de Lantenac. In the case of this character, fear is never permitted to make an appearance, creating an almost superhuman aura of impermeability. The climactic scene in the novel takes place when Lantenac is trapped in a burning tower with the very children he had been using as hostages. While almost everyone around him panics at the arrival of the Revolutionary forces, the Marquis remains calm.

Le marquis, infatigable, robuste comme un jeune homme, soulevant des poutres, portant des pierres, donnait l'exemple, mettait la main à la besogne, commandait, aidait, fraternisait, riait avec ce clan féroce, toujours le seigneur pourtant, haut, familier, élégant, farouche.

Il ne fallait pas lui répliquer. Il disait : *Si une moitié de vous se révoltait, je la ferais fusiller par l'autre, et je défendrais la place avec le reste.* Ces choses-là font qu'on adore un chef.<sup>359</sup>

His relaxed acceptance of the situation allows him to maintain control and inspire loyalty in his men. He is almost able to escape when the battle turns against him, but, somewhat against character, he chooses to save the children at the cost of his own freedom. For Lantenac, as for all the characters, what matters most is the future.

Throughout the novel, the Marquis remains a calm and authoritative presence in the face of incredible chaos and danger. The first time the reader sees Lantenac, he faces down a renegade canon that is threatening to destroy the ship carrying him to lead the Vendean revolt. In a famous scene, the canon thrashes about the boat, like “une machine qui se transforme en monstre,” a “bélier qui bat à sa fantaisie une muraille,”<sup>360</sup> while the Marquis calmly watches the struggle unfold. He is described as “un homme de pierre,” who “jetait sur cette dévastation un

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 325-326.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 60.

œil sévère. Il ne bougeait point.”<sup>361</sup> The sailor who had accidentally allowed the canon to escape eventually gets the machine under control, although the ship is too damaged to continue on its mission.

The ultimate control Lantenac maintains over his mission and those around him is equally evident in what immediately follows the canon scene. The sailor who had been in charge of securing the canons does eventually redeem himself by leaping in to save the ship and to help secure the gun to its moorings. The marquis rewards his bravery with a medal, and then promptly orders the man’s execution. The crew is stunned, but Lantenac explains his actions by stating that “il n’y a pas de faute réparable. Le courage doit être récompensé et la négligence doit être punie.”<sup>362</sup> Later, when confronted by Halmalo, the brother of the man he had executed, the marquis once again states that he was not responsible for the man’s death; rather, it was “sa faute”<sup>363</sup> for allowing the canon to become loose in the first place. As a sailor himself, Halmalo knows that nothing can be allowed to endanger the ship’s structural integrity, but what he cannot understand is Lantenac’s dual reactions to the situation. Immediately after presenting the sailor with a medal for valor, he has him executed, in keeping with his philosophy of justified rewards and punishments. Lantenac has been given command of the upcoming Vendean operations, but his background as all-powerful nobleman has also allowed him to take control of any situation in which he finds himself. Such is his position in life and his power of persuasion that the very man who had just tried to kill him will now become one of his most fervent supporters.

The fight to gain and maintain power is present throughout *Quatrevingt-Treize*. Hugo portrays the struggle for supremacy on multiple levels that touch all of society. The first, and

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 64-65.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 89.

most obvious, site of battle is between the Blancs, the monarchist troops, and the Bleus, the Revolutionary soldiers. When the Bonnet Rouge battalion first discovers Michelle Flécharde and her children, the sergeant quizzes her on her family's political ties. He asks: "Es-tu des bleus ? Es-tu des blancs ? Avec qui es-tu ?," demonstrating that there are only two possibilities in this dispute. Her inability to comprehend the questions is obvious in her response: "Je suis avec mes enfants."<sup>364</sup> It is incomprehensible to the soldiers that even a peasant woman from Bretagne could not have chosen sides. Both the Bleus and the Blancs will do everything they can to maintain the upper hand in their conflicts, although this is not readily evident until the story evolves to include the leaders of both factions. Until the commanders of both forces are described, the narrative focuses on discreet groups of soldiers who have no true individual power.

The struggle to gain ascendancy in the military battles also plays out in family relationships in *Quatrevingt-Treize*. The leader of the Vendean forces is the patriarch of the same family that produced his arch-rival, Gauvain, the leader of the Revolutionary forces. Although it is not unheard of at this time to have families split by their loyalties to the monarchy or to the Revolution, Hugo also makes the struggle that of two generations who have deeply opposing beliefs.

### **3.2.4 *Quatrevingt-Treize* as Political Statement**

Historically speaking, the memory of the Vendée is defined in terms of its counter-revolutionary activity. For Victor Hugo, the Vendée was intimately wrapped up with memories of his

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 38.



childhood. Sophie Trébuchet, Hugo's mother, was from the nearby Breton region and loved to define herself against her Republican husband. As Jean-Clément Martin points out, Vendean families lived to transmit the stories of their rebellion and the cruel fate they suffered at the hands of the Republic. The fierce loyalty the region felt toward the monarchy would continue throughout Victor Hugo's lifetime. After their defeat during the Revolution, Vendean soldiers fought for the kings of Portugal and Spain and for the Pope. In 1870, they fought against the Prussians, aligning themselves "en continuité évidente avec les combattants de 1793, dont ils se réclament."<sup>365</sup> Through this continuous fighting and their unswerving loyalty to the Crown, Vendean earned themselves a place in both local and national memory.

Throughout the novel, there are several moments in which the voice of nineteenth-century Hugo makes itself heard. At one point, Hugo seems to share the Marquis de Sade's view that the Revolution stopped a bit too early: "Après 93, la Révolution traversa une occultation singulière, le siècle sembla oublier de finir ce qu'il avait commencé [...]." However, he immediately follows this observation with a lament for what did come next: "on ne sait quelle orgie s'interposa, prit le premier plan, fit reculer au second l'effrayante apocalypse, voila la vision démesurée, et éclata de rire après l'épouvante ; la tragédie disparut dans la parodie, et au fond de l'horizon une fumée de carnaval effaça vaguement Méduse."<sup>366</sup> The second half of this statement seems to reflect what Louis de Bruno feared, the complete degradation of society into an apocalyptic setting.

A few chapters later, Hugo once again comments on the importance of this pivotal moment in French history: "Et aujourd'hui, après quatre-vingts ans écoulés [...] impossible de

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<sup>365</sup> Jean-Clément Martin "La Vendée, région mémoire : Bleus et blancs," in Nora, 524.

<sup>366</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 148.

ne pas être attentif à ce grand passage d'ombres.”<sup>367</sup> Hugo repeats this “shadow” motif in a description of La Tourgue, peasant abbreviation for La Tour Gauvain, the family stronghold where the novel’s definitive battle takes place: “La Tourgue, qui il y a quarante ans était une ruine et qui aujourd’hui est une ombre, était en 1793 une forteresse.”<sup>368</sup> The “grand passage d’ombres” was, for Hugo, History that came without the knowledge or permission of the average man, but it was something that called for action and reflection.

Much as the Revolution was a series of events that men tried to control, or at least, to which they tried to react, so too were the recent Franco-Prussian War and Paris Commune. Hugo saw historical events, like the Revolution, as “immanent phenomena”:

La Révolution est une forme du phénomène immanent qui nous presse de toutes parts et que nous appelons la Nécessité.  
Devant cette mystérieuse complication de bienfaits et de souffrances se dresse le Pourquoi ? de l’histoire.  
*Parce que.* Cette réponse de celui qui ne sait rien est aussi la réponse de celui qui sait tout.<sup>369</sup>

The phrase also calls to attention the narrator’s ultimate knowledge as he enjoys the privilege afforded by historical distance. History was, for Hugo, a force that was out of our control, but was absolutely and inescapably necessary to mankind’s development.

Hugo’s conception of History is wrapped up in his theory of ananke, or the fateful necessity that mankind must fight. In the preface to his *Travailleurs de la mer* (1866), he noted three specific forms of ananke from which man must liberate himself:

Un triple anankè pèse sur nous, l’anankè des dogmes, l’anankè des lois, l’anankè des choses. Dans *Notre-Dame de Paris*, l’auteur a dénoncé le premier ; dans *les Misérables*,

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 219-220.

il a signalé le second ; dans ce livre, il indique le troisième. A ces trois fatalités qui enveloppent l'homme se mêle la fatalité intérieure, l'anankè suprême, le cœur humain.<sup>370</sup>

Hugo looks to the human heart as the ultimate weapon to liberate humanity from the pressures of dogmas, laws, and material possessions.

Given the grave situation in contemporary France, Hugo uses moments from 1793 to illustrate the difficulty in making decisions and what can happen when the wrong choice is made. As Gauvain debates what to do with his grand-uncle, the Marquis de Lantenac, his choice hinges on family relations versus the danger to the *patrie*. He sees a possible future in which France could suffer for his choice: “Quoi! la France était aux abois! la France était livrée, ouverte, démantelée!”<sup>371</sup> Of course, this horrifying situation was exactly what had happened to France in 1870. Because Gauvain eventually chooses his family loyalty and compassion above his duty to the Revolution, he will be executed, with his full cooperation and understanding. His execution and Cimourdain's suicide are yet more examples of ananke, the historical and psychological necessity portrayed throughout the novel.

In addition to noting the Revolution's historical relevance to modern times, Hugo also goes out of his way to criticize Prussia and the foreign wars waged against France, reflecting the contemporary situation. Although he is careful to respect the historical accuracy and integrity of his novel, Hugo is able to weave contemporary events and references into the tapestry of his story. Given the political and martial strife the country had just undergone, it is unsurprising that Hugo chose to criticize Prussia's role in past French military campaigns. Speaking of exterior dangers to the country, Danton observes that:

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<sup>370</sup> Victor Hugo, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Yves Gohin, *Roman III*, preface to *Travailleurs de la mer* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1985), 45.

<sup>371</sup> *Quatrevingt-Treize*, 435.

En attendant, Brunswick grossit et avance. Il arbore le drapeau allemand sur toutes les places françaises qu'il prend. Le margrave de Brandebourg est aujourd'hui l'arbitre de l'Europe ; il empoche nos provinces ; il s'adjugera la Belgique, vous verrez ; on dirait que c'est pour Berlin que nous travaillons ; si cela continue, et si nous n'y mettons ordre, la révolution française se sera faite au profit de Potsdam ; elle aura eu pour unique résultat d'agrandir le petit Etat de Frédéric II, et nous aurons tué le roi de France pour le roi de Prusse.<sup>372</sup>

Hugo's omniscient narrator uses the future perfect, lending a sense of anachronism that appears throughout the novel. From his historical distance, the narrator knew quite well that this very situation had become possible, given German unity and the proclamation of the Second Reich in Versailles in January 1871. Many of the problems mentioned in Danton's remarks would reappear one hundred years later in response to the Prussian occupation of France. As part of the reparations for the recent war between the two countries, France had to give up Alsace-Lorraine, pay huge indemnities, and allow occupation of Paris until all the conditions of the Treaty of Frankfurt were fulfilled. With Prussia's victory and dominance of France in the recent War, there was the threat that the French state would be absorbed into German control.

During the Marquis de Lantenac's diatribe against the Revolutionaries, he warns them that by turning their backs on France's glorious history, which for him reads France's noble history, the country is in danger of losing everything: "Soyez les hommes nouveaux ! Devenez petits !" <sup>373</sup> These last remarks cannot be read as anything but a direct criticism of Louis-Napoléon, whom Hugo had already dubbed "Napoléon le Petit." The Emperor was widely criticized for his practice of creating "hommes nouveaux" by ennobling rich men who backed him. Lantenac, speaking for the counter-revolutionaries, says that the Revolutionaries have caused France to be invaded by foreign powers: "vous êtes un peuple fini ; vous subirez ce viol,

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 451.

l'invasion."<sup>374</sup> Any mention of an invasion would have immediately led Hugo's readers to think of the ongoing problems associated with Prussia's attack and subsequent occupation. The moral decline of the country and France's loss during the War were laid at the feet of the Second Empire and its opportunistic proponents, and Hugo places these unpatriotic words in the mouth of his most fanatically monarchist character. In contrast, the most patriotic words are given to the young Revolutionary at the moment of his death. Rather than repenting his actions or encouraging the continuation of the fight, he simply cries "Vive la République!"<sup>375</sup> just before dying, providing the last bit of dialogue for the novel. Of the two characters, the romantic hero appeals more to readers, with his willingness to sacrifice for the future, compared to his elders, who live with fixed determination for past ideals.

The main point of contention that can be raised with Hugo's novel is the contradictory nature of the events narrated. The didactic intent is in many ways undermined when Terrorists, Republicans, and Monarchists are presented in positive terms at various points throughout the novel. Both Gauvain and Lantenac's men revere them, and Cimourdain is a widely respected (and feared) Revolutionary. In 1874, the country was still trying to work out its past, as evidenced by the 1880 amnesty a few years later. *Quatrevingt-Treize* tries to present the actions of both sides as legitimate wartime behavior, in an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable in France's history.

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 450.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 482.

### 3.2.5 Hugo as Monument to the Republic

The years following the declaration of the Third Republic were a difficult time for Victor Hugo. Within a few short years, he had lost his wife and two sons. Beginning in 1878, Hugo was stricken with a series of small strokes, which slowed down his active lifestyle, although he continued to speak out and write about causes important to him. He was buried as a national hero in 1885. He had fallen ill about two weeks before his death, launching national anxiety about the end of a legend. *Le Rappel*, the newspaper founded by Hugo's sons and carried on by his friend, Auguste Vacquerie, reported that "deux attachés du ministère de l'Intérieur furent dépêchés sur les lieux pour renseigner le gouvernement sur la marche de la maladie."<sup>376</sup> Crowds of well-wishers gathered in the streets below Hugo's window and the entire country seemed to go on hold for two weeks.

The question of Victor Hugo's final resting place gave birth to extended and bitter debates. Since the poet had not designated his choice, it was left to the government to decide his burial site. Almost immediately, the Panthéon was suggested, although the building had served as a religious site since the time of Napoléon I. It was eventually decided, against much conservative protest, to deconsecrate the edifice and put it to use once more as a mausoleum for France's finest citizens. Many people saw this move as a return to Revolutionary concepts, since the building had been conceived as a church, but had been immediately appropriated by the Revolution as a national monument for the honored dead. The government took great pains to reassure the people of their intentions toward the funeral. It would not be a "journée de révolution," but rather "une manifestation grandiose de la reconnaissance de la nation envers l'un

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<sup>376</sup> Avner Ben-Amos, "Les funérailles de Victor Hugo," in Nora, 430.

de ses plus glorieux enfants.”<sup>377</sup> The emphasis here was clearly on Hugo as a national treasure rather than on his more radical political associations.

Hugo died in his bed on 22 May 1885, but the funeral was so elaborate that it took ten days to arrange. In the meantime, between fifty and eighty people were wounded at Père Lachaise cemetery on 24 May, during a memorial service for the Communard massacres of the *semaine sanglante*. It was feared that Victor Hugo’s funeral would lead to further uprisings, including conflicts between laics and Catholics, Republicans and Monarchists, all of whom tried to claim Hugo as a potential *porte-parole*; as a result, the military presence at the funeral cortège was increased to prevent any potential problems.<sup>378</sup> The French government was well aware that the eyes of the world would be upon Paris for this extraordinary funeral. Fortunately, there were no major problems, although the crowd along the route had swelled to more than one million. The procession was marked by the sound of heavy artillery in Paris for the first time since 1871, serving as both a tribute and a reminder to the crowds that the military was present and on guard.<sup>379</sup> Many of the cannons were placed on the very hills that had housed the Communards years earlier, a fitting tribute to a man that had supported their memory for so long.

### 3.3 JULES VERNE

In the works of both Victor Hugo and Jules Verne, the French Revolution takes on multiple levels of importance. The Revolution represents not only a political and ideological change for France; it was also the spark for many years of war, within the country and outside its borders.

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>378</sup> Robb, 527.

<sup>379</sup> Ben-Amos, 451.

Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize* focuses on the internal struggle in western France. The Vendean war brought British military forces to bear on northwestern France, in an attempt to restore the European monarchy. Verne's *Le Chemin de France* also explores foreign wars during this time, but it focuses on the eastern front, setting the action primarily in Prussian territory. Much like Louis de Bruno's *Lioncel*, Verne's story relates the struggle of a soldier to return to his homeland after dealing with the dangers of battling in the East. The main difference between *Lioncel* and *Chemin* being, of course, that the former tale has a hero who serves with the Coalition forces, while the latter's hero is leading his family back to the safety of Republican troops within the country's borders.

There is a recent renewed interest in the works of Jules Verne, following the 1994 publication of his previously unreleased *Paris au XXIème siècle* and the centenary celebration of the author's death in 2005. Indeed, according to UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, Jules Verne is the third most translated author in the world, following Walt Disney Productions and Agatha Christie.<sup>380</sup> Even one hundred years after his death, Verne's stories are still being read by children and scholars alike, and serve as the basis for a multitude of films.

### 3.3.1 Reading Verne in Context

The first thing to note regarding Verne's work is that it is ineffective to search for what the author meant in his texts, because they were drastically altered and censored, first by his editor, Pierre-Jules Hetzel, and later by his son Michel Verne and Hetzel's son, Louis-Jules

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<sup>380</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Statistics on Whole Index Translationum Database: Top 50 Author" *Index Translationum*. 23 May 2008.  
<<http://databases.unesco.org/xtrans/stat/xTransStat.a?VL1=A&top=50&lg=0>>.



Hetzel. While well-established authors such as Victor Hugo were able to insist on their own beliefs in the face of editorial pressure, Verne frequently caved under such demands. Both Hugo and Verne worked with Pierre-Jules Hetzel, a well-known publisher of the time. Among the titles Hugo published with Hetzel were some of his more political works, including *Napoléon le Petit* (1852), *Les Châtiments* (1853), and *Cromwell* (1827). Both Hugo and Hetzel were in exile early in the Second Empire, but Verne did not join their literary circle until after Hetzel's exile ended with the 1859 general amnesty. Hugo did not return under the general amnesty, but as a publisher, Hetzel was under much greater pressure to return for business reasons. While Hugo's reputation and financial security were firmly established by the time of the Franco-Prussian War, Verne was still struggling to support himself as a relatively new writer. Hugo was thus allowed much more freedom from Hetzel's oftentimes overbearing editorial style. Despite frequently being dismissed as a mere children's author or science fiction writer, Verne often imbued his stories with fierce nationalism and moral questions. Unfortunately, many of these works were later distilled into socially acceptable escapist stories for French youth through the efforts of Verne's longtime publisher and editor.

After the Franco-Prussian War, the newly established Third Republic turned its attention to French youth as a hope for the future, and children became "a subject for serious concern, not only in the individual family, but in the society at large."<sup>381</sup> An entire generation of children immediately became the focus of national educational reforms and political philosophers, including Victor Hugo, who considered children to be the future of France. The Jules Ferry educational reforms focused national attention on many problems brought to the front by the

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<sup>381</sup> Esther S. Kanipe, "Hetzel and the Bibliothèque d'Education et de Récréation," *Yale French Studies*, 43 (1969): 74. N.B. The Bibliothèque was the name for Hetzel's children's literature division, while the individual journal was called *Le Magasin illustré d'éducation et de récréation*.

War. French soldiers had had a very difficult time communicating with regiments from other regions, due to various patois and dialects, and the French army was seen as being less educated than their German counterparts.<sup>382</sup> In order to combat these problems, it was decided that the education of future French citizens would become a national priority.

In 1863, Verne began working with Hetzel, a fervent Republican, publisher, and children's author, who also worked with Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, and George Sand. Hetzel's publishing house was particularly known for its *Bibliothèque illustrée d'éducation et de récréation*, with most French children growing up reading these works. One of the ways children were brought into French society was through youthful stories of adventure, like those published by Hetzel. Even Jean-Paul Sartre would later reminisce about the pleasures to be found in the series, although he admits to favoring its lighter works:

I preferred the nonsense of Paul d'Ivoi to Jules Verne, who was too heavy. But, regardless of author, I adored the works in the Hetzel series, little theatres whose red cover with gold tassels represented the curtain; the gilt edges were the footlights. I owe to those magic boxes – and not to the balanced sentences of Chateaubriand – my first encounters with Beauty. When I opened them, I forgot about everything. Was that reading? No, but it was death by ecstasy.<sup>383</sup>

Whatever children like young Sartre thought they were reading, they were being not only entertained, but also carefully educated and indoctrinated into French political and nationalist ideals. Under Hetzel's guidance, they would receive strong literary lessons in how to be good Republicans while filling their imaginations with tales of wonder.

Although he is frequently dismissed as a children's author or adventure story writer, Jules Verne had profound goals for his works. His main ambition was to denounce the social ills he saw around him, and through his works, "he conceived vast enterprises, aspired to the triumphs

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<sup>382</sup> Eugen Weber, 477.

<sup>383</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 73.

of Balzac, and dreamed of shaking modern society to its very foundations by the audacity and cruelty of his depictions.”<sup>384</sup> Despite Verne’s stated aims, Hetzel categorically censored many of his works based on societal criticism. Whether due to political or financial reasons, Hetzel’s censorship had a immense impact on which Vernian works the public would enjoy and what form those stories would take. *Paris au XXIème Siècle* (written 1863, published 1994) was rejected as a “disaster,” showing “no originality ... no wit.”<sup>385</sup> *Voyage en Angleterre et en Ecosse* (1860), *Le Comte de Chanteleine* (1864), and *Forceurs de blocus* (1865) were all also initially rejected by Hetzel for commercial and social reasons. Paul Alkon notes that:

[Hetzel] acted as a conservative muse-cum-superego, sometimes actually censoring manuscripts and always restraining Verne in ways that pushed toward concealment his most dangerously oppositional impulses while encouraging his didactic penchant for combining lessons in science and history with adventures safely purged of dangerous women, sex, and overt attack on bourgeois values.<sup>386</sup>

He had no desire to upset his bourgeois clientele and refused to publish anything that could be considered as too risqué for the primarily juvenile audience he was pursuing for Verne’s works.

In his quest for socially acceptable literature, Hetzel went so far as to suggest that Verne not use contemporary political events in his works. During the editing of *Mathias Sandorf* (1885), he writes: “Si vous voulez arriver au roman historique, il faut y entrer sur des faits plus éloignée [sic] que ceux-là.”<sup>387</sup> Verne’s response to this suggestion was to defend his choice: “Il me fallait d’ailleurs les circonstances d’une guerre pour faire accepter les sévérités du gouvernement autrichien contre des conspirateurs.”<sup>388</sup> The truly interesting thing to note in this exchange is that the war in question is not the Franco-Prussian War, but rather the Prussian

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<sup>384</sup> William Butcher, *Jules Verne: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), 154.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Paul K. Alkon, *Science Fiction before 1900: Imagination Discovers Technology* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 66.

<sup>387</sup> Hetzel letter to Jules Verne, 24 avril 1884. Cited in Dumas’s *Correspondance (1863-1886)*, tome III, 217.

<sup>388</sup> Verne letter to Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 25 avril 1884. Cited in Dumas’s *Correspondance (1863-1886)*, tome III, 218.

victory over Austria in 1866. In France, references to Prussia's military might were still unpleasant reminders of Napoléon III's capitulation and the subsequent occupation.

Jules Verne's escapist tales were among Hetzel's most successful publications and were marketed in a series called *Voyages extraordinaires*, which would include the author's first major stories to be published, *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863), *Voyages au centre de la Terre* (1864), as well as *Le Chemin de France* (1887). Verne published over sixty-five novels, thirty plays, and several non-fictional works and librettos, most of which were included in the *Voyages* series. The sheer volume of his work can partially be attributed to various contracts, requiring Verne to produce between two and three stories each year. The works typically followed Hetzel's formula of mixing fiction and scientific verisimilitude, resulting in stories that appealed to a wide audience, from children to conservative adults needing an escape from their daily lives. Although Verne favored the Romantic school over the Classical approach, he saw himself as independent of any existing group: "I'm afraid the only [school] I belong to is my own."<sup>389</sup> This statement was written at the beginning of his career in 1852, but Verne's sense of separation from his fellow writers would continue throughout his life. Despite his feelings of isolation and his lack of early success, Verne never really felt at home in any setting other than that of a literary nature: "literature is an art with which I am identified and which I will never give up."<sup>390</sup> Literature and his quest for knowledge would prove to be the driving forces in his life.

Jules Verne was frequently disdained by the more "serious" writers of his time. Although he was hurt by the lack of critical acclaim and professional acceptance, Verne accepted that he was writing a new form of literature and that it was not exactly like the classical canon's ideals. Verne's *Voyages extraordinaires* would be crowned by the Académie, but the author

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<sup>389</sup> Butcher, 113.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 129.

himself would never be granted membership to this esteemed society. In an 1894 interview, he noted “je ne compte pas dans la littérature française,”<sup>391</sup> showing his regretful acceptance that he would never be fully accepted as a serious writer among his countrymen.

Although most people now know Jules Verne as a writer of science fiction, according to his publisher, Verne’s literary goal was to “résumer toutes les connaissances géographiques, géologiques, physiques, astronomiques amassées par la science moderne, et de refaire, sous une forme attrayante pittoresque ... l’histoire de l’univers.”<sup>392</sup> He envisioned a sort of scientific *Divina Commedia*, much like Balzac’s humanistic version from earlier in the century. Unlike Dante or Balzac, Verne did not intend his works to be a unified collection; rather, he wanted his stories to impart a desire for scientific knowledge to his audience.

Lacking a strong scientific background or extensive travel experience, Verne spent much of his time researching his works. He was very careful to verify his facts and frequently criticized other writers who wrote of improbable or impossible situations. For example, he took H.G. Wells to task for his use of cavorite, a substance impervious to gravity, in his *First Men in the Moon* (1901). Interviewed in 1903, Verne noted major differences between Wells’ story and his own *De la Terre à la Lune: Trajet direct en 97 heures 20 minutes* (1865):

We do not proceed in the same manner. It occurs to me that his stories do not repose on very scientific bases. No, there is no rapport between his work and mine. I make use of physics. He invents. I go to the moon in a cannonball, discharged from a cannon. Here there is no invention. He goes to Mars in an airship, which he constructs of a metal which does away with the law of gravitation. *Ça c’est très joli* ... but show me this metal. Let him produce it!<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Timothy Unwin, *Jules Verne: Journeys in Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 18.

<sup>392</sup> Pierre-Jules Hetzel, “Avertissement de l’Editeur” in Jules Verne, *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras*. (Paris: Hachette, 1978), 8.

<sup>393</sup> Alkon, 7.

Fiercely proud of the technological possibilities his novels represented, Verne was unable to tolerate writers who created fanciful stories with improbable technology. However, just like many of his fellow writers, Verne used science as a catalyst for his imaginative tales.

The term “science fiction” was first coined in 1851, although it was quickly forgotten until 1929 when Hugo Gernsback reinvented it to describe his project of stimulating fiction in the style of Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, and H.G. Wells.<sup>394</sup> Despite this literary grouping, there is some debate as to whether or not Verne can rightly be considered a science fiction writer at all. As Brian Stableford notes, Jules Verne’s methodology consisted of “carefully constrained extrapolation of contemporary technology,”<sup>395</sup> giving his stories a degree of verisimilitude often lacking in the more typical science fiction stories. Whether or not we agree with the criticism that he was not a pure science fiction writer, Verne’s publisher frequently marketed him as “the father of science fiction,”<sup>396</sup> making him one of the leading names in the genre.

Verne’s use of science is frequently a distractive device to entice the reader into accepting the true didactic purpose of the work, much like the Marquis de Sade often seduced his reader with shocking images before revealing his philosophical intent. In a classic example of this literary ‘seduction,’ Captain Nemo’s submarine in *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers* (1870) is described as a technical marvel, defying all conventional attempts to locate and destroy it. It is only after becoming acquainted with this incredible technology that Nemo’s rational reasons for needing such a device are revealed. As is typical, Verne has the story’s scientific knowledge form the basis of its philosophical message.

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>395</sup> Brian Stableford, “Science fiction before the genre” in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20.

<sup>396</sup> Gary K. Wolfe, “Science fiction and its editors” in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, 97.

Jules Verne's views of the Republic as a form of government were formed by the events of 1848 Revolution. In his early twenties by the time the revolution and subsequent nationalist movements swept Europe, Verne would always retain a somewhat romantic notion of the workers' figure. Even as the young author was becoming involved in the events around him, he had to continue to please his conservative family, who were still supporting him. Writing to his parents in May, 1848, he claimed that he favored "the quiet moderation of M. Thiers and his associates, because they represent law and order."<sup>397</sup> Free of family constraints, however, he went to great effort to attend the festivities organized by Alphonse de Lamartine in honor of the new Republican constitution.<sup>398</sup> Many of Verne's works would reflect the nationalist movements begun during this period, including French, German, British, and Hungarian struggles. His *Voyages extraordinaires* collection is filled with works dealing with nationalist themes, including *Le Château des Carpathes* (1892), *Wilhelm Storitz* (posthumous 1910), and *Famille sans nom* (1889). While many of his stories had an anti-colonial message, Verne was especially critical of non-French efforts to colonize foreign lands. Like many of his contemporaries, Verne demonstrated a sort of anglophobia, evident throughout his career. Anti-British themes can be seen in numerous works, including *Les Enfants du Capitaine Grant* (1867), which portrays a tribal group at war with the English.

Equally reviled for their expansionist tendencies, Prussians were also attacked in several stories, such as *Les Cinq cents millions de la Bégum* (1879), which was originally written by Paschal Grousset, a Corsican author and revolutionary. Grousset first gained notoriety when he attacked Pierre Bonaparte in 1870. After being released, he joined the Paris Commune, was

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<sup>397</sup> Jean Chesneaux, *The Political and Social Ideas of Jules Verne*, trans. Thomas Wikeley (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 46.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

arrested, and sent to a penal colony in New Caledonia from which he escaped. Hetzel clandestinely bought the rights to the story and asked Verne to rework it. Despite the authors' political and ideological differences, Grousset collaborated with Verne on two more novels, *L'Étoile du sud* (1884) and *L'Épave du Cynthia* (1885). It was only due to the Communards' amnesty that Grousset was finally able to claim credit for the latter work.<sup>399</sup> The Bégum novel tells the story of a Frenchman and a German who have inherited a fortune from a mutual relative. The Frenchman uses his money to establish an ideal community, called France-Ville, while the German spends his portion creating Stahlstadt (steel city), a city that produces weaponry. Stahlstadt's main raison d'être is to destroy France-Ville. The German villain ultimately fails in his quest, but the novel's nationalistic message was tremendously popular with a postwar French audience. The story offered hope of future retribution to a sorely beleaguered nation: "the lesson of 1870 will turn against those who gave it."<sup>400</sup> Indeed, not only did the Germans in the story fail in their quest for world domination, but France-Ville was able to use the ruins of Stahlstadt for its own benefit.

Despite his obvious patriotic preferences, French national identity was not really a widely explored theme in Verne's works. *Le Chemin de France* (1887) and *Face au drapeau* (1896) are among the few narratives that deal overtly with issues of French national esteem and concepts of national identity. *Face au drapeau* is the story of a French inventor and a French engineer who have been abducted by a renegade pirate, who seems to have no country and seeks only to use the inventor's weapon for his own gain. Thomas Roch, the inventor has been placed in an asylum and does not seem to respond to anything but promises of wealth and autocracy. Simon

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<sup>399</sup> Jules Verne, *The Begum's Millions*, trans. Stanford L. Luce (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), xvi-xvii.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 92. This particularly rousing comment provoked the Nazis to remove the book from German libraries during World War II. Ibid., 212.



Hunt, the French engineer, has appointed himself Roch's guardian, and it is only his appeals to Roch's latent patriotism that save the day: "when he found himself facing the flag he understood – and drew back."<sup>401</sup> All of Hunt's pleading and rationalizing had no effect, but when faced with the French tricolore, Roch at last made the right decision.

In 1856, Jules Verne married Honorine de Viane, a socially ambitious and conservative widow, who oversaw the household with an iron fist.<sup>402</sup> In 1861, the couple would produce their only biological child, Michel, who later edited some of his father's works for posthumous publication. Given his family's background, Verne was widely regarded as an establishment figure, but later in life, he became more critical of official policies. Verne's publisher, Hetzel, frequently found it necessary to smooth the edges of the author's criticisms, because the author's "need to conform usually prevailed over [his] almost equally insistent inclination to oppose the established order."<sup>403</sup> Verne's early works showed optimism based on his belief that technology could advance society, although human morality would have to be the ultimate mediator. He saw Europe as having a central role in the technological and social development of the world. However, as the *fin de siècle* drew nearer, he succumbed, along with many other writers and artists, to a more depressed and gloomier view of the future. As Jean Chesneaux notes, "Verne comes face to face with social realities. His scientific forecasts now give place to the problems of social organization, social conditions, and the responsibility of scientists toward society; in

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<sup>401</sup> Jules Verne, *Facing the Flag* (New York: F. Tennyson Neely, 1897), 212.

<sup>402</sup> Butcher, 219.

<sup>403</sup> Alkon, 65.

each case, as we shall see, he reaches a pessimistic conclusion.”<sup>404</sup> Aging, a series of illnesses, and several legal suits also contributed specifically to Verne’s mild depression.<sup>405</sup>

In part, this pessimism was due to the lingering nostalgia Verne felt for the Second Republic and the cynicism engendered by the failings of the Second Empire. Shortly before the Empire collapsed, he writes:

that is what the Empire has brought us to after eighteen years of power: a thousand million in the bank, trade and industry at an end; eighty stocks on the market paying no interest, not to mention those which are still likely to fail; a military statute which takes us back to the times of the Huns and Visigoths; the prospect of a series of stupid wars.<sup>406</sup>

This statement reveals a Verne who has lost hope for the future under the Empire and who has no respect for the disastrous choices made by the régime. His practical nature shines through in his lingering interest in the financial repercussions, but it is the “stupid wars” comment that perhaps most betrays his frustration.

While most of his stories show a sort of Victorian positivism that may strike the modern reader as a bit naïve, Verne’s later nonscientific works show a decidedly darker streak. Rebellion and anarchy are increasingly prominent themes in his stories, with many of the heroes being recluses trying to escape colonizing superpowers. *Mathias Sandorf*, a novel about a social revolutionary, and *Naufragés du Jonathan* (posthumous, 1909), which features a noble anarchist, were among two of his later successes.

In order to keep himself informed and up-to-date on contemporary events, Verne frequently read *Le Figaro*, of which he was a loyal reader since before the War. By the time of the Commune, the journal had moved away from its satirical roots, and was virulently opposed

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<sup>404</sup> Chesneaux, 181.

<sup>405</sup> For detailed information on the legal suits, see Olivier Dumas, *Jules Verne* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1988), 191-198.

<sup>406</sup> Chesneaux, 47.

to the uprising. At the end of the Second Empire, Verne also subscribed to the short-lived *Lanterne* (1868-1869), known for its ferociously anti-government stance. He chose primarily anti-imperial journals and maintained subscriptions to many newssheets throughout his life. In addition to the journals, Verne read many works by authors who touched on social themes, including Stendhal, Hugo, Zola, and the translated works of Dickens.<sup>407</sup> He also strongly admired James Fenimore Cooper and Edgar Allan Poe, both American writers of adventure and fantastic stories who were not yet well-respected on the international writing scene.

In 1888, just after the publication of *Le Chemin de France*, Verne entered local politics and became a town councilor in Amiens, where he championed many improvements, including expanding fine arts education, charity institutions, and theater space in the city. Verne shocked his family by running on a left-wing ticket. His political views tended to be on the conservative side, but his choice of ticket was “opportunistic, for his many interventions remained resolutely apolitical.”<sup>408</sup> He summed up his political position, saying “en sociologie, mon goût est l’ordre,”<sup>409</sup> showing a slightly conservative, middle-of-the-road approach. Verne found his fellow council members to be a mixed bag: “il y a des enragés, que l’on calmera, des imbéciles dont les propos l’égaieront et d’autres qui ont du bon sens.”<sup>410</sup> All in all, he got along quite well with his fellow councilors and was kept happily busy with local improvement projects. His political attitude can perhaps best be summed up in a letter dated 14 May 1870, when, in the face of increasing political tensions leading up to the end of the Second Empire, he simply states: “au

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<sup>407</sup> Butcher, 207-208.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>409</sup> Joëlle Dusseau, *Jules Verne* (Paris: Perrin, 2005), 392.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

diabla la politique.”<sup>411</sup> His preceding letter had expressed his frustration at the situation, but in typical Vernian fashion, he realizes the futility of trying to understand politics.

Although he tried to remain apolitical in his actions, the one constant in Verne’s political views remained an opposition to socialism.<sup>412</sup> For him, the Paris Commune represented all that could go wrong in a socialist régime:

Quant à la politique, cela finira. Il fallait que ce mouvement socialiste eut lieu. Eh bien, c’est fait, il sera vaincu, et si le gouvernement républicain montre dans la répression une énergie *terrible*, - il en a le devoir et le droit, - la France républicaine a cinquante ans de paix intérieure.<sup>413</sup>

Despite his youthful devotion to 1848, Verne later stated that he was opposed to “every revolution and insurrection before 1851.”<sup>414</sup> He despised the Commune, saying in an 1871 letter that “I really hope ... they shoot the socialists like dogs.”<sup>415</sup> Even years later, he still held to his harsh opinion of the movement while praising a new member of the Academy for his anti-communard stance: “In your protest against the horrors of the Commune, you say that ‘the members of that sect have been murdering the ministers of Religion, as if the death of martyrs had ever done anything else than increase the influence of Religion,’ and you are absolutely right, Sir.”<sup>416</sup> His strong dislike of the Commune is one of the few political beliefs in which Verne never wavered. He saw the Commune as a group of “hotheads” that threatened respectable a bourgeois lifestyle and should justly be punished by the Republic, the only government “chosen by the majority of the flock.”<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Verne letter to Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 14 mai 1870. Cited in Olivier Dumas, Piero Gondolo della Riva, and Volker Dehs, ed. *Correspondance inédite de Jules Verne et de Pierre-Jules Hetzel (1863-1886)*, tome I (Genève : Editions Slatkine, 1999), 138.

<sup>412</sup> Butcher, 280.

<sup>413</sup> Verne letter to Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 22 avril 1871. Cited in Dumas’s *Correspondance (1863-1886)*, tome I, 158.

<sup>414</sup> Butcher, 280.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Verne letter Gustave Dubois, 8 January 1875. Cited in Chesneaux, 15-16.

<sup>417</sup> Chesneaux, 13.

Verne's general political views and, more specifically, his anti-communard stance were in complete accord with those of his friend and editor, Hetzel. The publisher referred to the Commune as "le crime d'une insurrection, l'ennemi présent" and Communards as "gens qui de fous vont devenir enragés."<sup>418</sup> However, Hetzel's view of the Commune was perhaps a bit more understanding than that of Verne. He believed that both sides of the conflict were at fault, although the more radical Communards were to bear the brunt of the blame: "d'un côté des fous furieux, des scélérats, des barbares, de l'autre des bourgeois égoïstes, indifférents."<sup>419</sup> Like Verne, Hetzel would choose a less-than-perfect Republic over an unstable socialist régime.

An opponent of both Napoléon III and the Commune, Verne came to the conclusion that "the Republic ... is the only just and legitimate government."<sup>420</sup> As a result of his strong attachment to the Republic, Verne profoundly believed that the Dreyfus Affair was damaging to the government. Believing the Captain to be a German spy, Verne saw him as a great threat to the security and integrity of the French Republic. His anti-Dreyfusard stance aligned him with Charles Maurras, founder of the right-wing, monarchist *Action Française*, although Verne was never involved in the more radical actions associated with these sorts of movements. In an 1899 letter, Verne described himself as "moi, qui suis anti-dreyfusard dans l'âme,"<sup>421</sup> publicly declaring himself to be on the conservative side of this *cause-célèbre*. Although some critics blame Verne's stance on possible anti-Semitism, his allegiance to the Republic alone might have been enough for him to feel profoundly "anti-dreyfusard" during the controversy.

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<sup>418</sup> Christian Robin, *Un Editeur et son siècle: Pierre-Jules Hetzel (1814-1886)* (Saint-Sébastien, France: Société Crocus, 1988), 39.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Butcher, 280-281.

<sup>421</sup> Verne letter to Louis-Jules Hetzel, 11 février 1899. Cited in Olivier Dumas, Volker Dehs, and Gondollo della Riva, ed. *Correspondance inédite de Jules et Michel Verne avec l'éditeur Louis-Jules Hetzel (1886-1914)*, tome II, 53.

As a result of Hetzel's editorial interference and Jules Verne's own impulsive personality, it is extremely difficult to pin down specific leanings in his texts. If one looks for them, it is possible to find socialist and anti-socialist, nationalist and universalistic tendencies in Verne's works. According to one of the top Vernian critics, William Butcher: "[i]t would be unwise, in sum, to look for general tendencies as to Verne's character in his books, partly because most of the works he wrote have never been read in their original form, but mainly because the views expressed are so inconsistent as to cause total confusion."<sup>422</sup> As Butcher points out, it is absolutely necessary to relate Verne's personal correspondence and political statements to his works in order to truly understand his convictions.

Although Verne did not actively involve himself in the politics surrounding the Franco-Prussian War, he did take exception at some of the overly patriotic fervor, saying to his father: "really your last letter was a little chauvinistic. I don't that much want to give the Prussians a good hiding ... Let's not be stupid or boastful and admit that the Prussians are as strong as the French, now that everyone's fighting with long-range weapons."<sup>423</sup> Verne remained, in essence, indifferent to the War and the events surrounding it, traveling about the countryside to see family and on pleasure outings until the battles began to curtail his voyages. He did serve in the local National Guard, but frequently left his post to visit family and his family played host to a group of "gentle, peaceful"<sup>424</sup> Prussian soldiers billeted in his home.

The last years of Verne's life were marked by several incidents leading him to write darker and less fanciful works. An 1884 trip to Italy allowed him an audience with Pope Leo XIII, in which the two men discussed "the situation in Italy, divorce, freemasonry, and the Verne

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<sup>422</sup> Butcher, 241.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

family.”<sup>425</sup> The novelist received the Pope’s blessing for his works’ moral messages. It is unclear whether the Pontiff had indeed read any of the works or why he was under the impression that Verne was a good, conservative writer. Given the strong anti-Republican stance of most Catholics in France at this time, it is perhaps surprising that the Pope would grant a well-known republican author an audience. It is interesting to note that Verne was never overly Catholic in his views. Hetzel, an “athée privé,” contrarily insisted on more religious references than Verne had originally intended, and would frequently “réclame plus de présence divine” in the author’s stories.<sup>426</sup> Verne relied heavily on science and his belief that technology could help mankind to forge a better future. He also strongly condemned the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes for weakening France at the expense of her rivals, a theme that is central to *Le Chemin de France*.

In 1886, Jules Verne was shot by a paranoid nephew, leaving him with a permanent limp and associated health problems. His nephew was committed to an asylum, but the author would never recover from the betrayal. Just one week after the attack, Pierre-Jules Hetzel died. With the death of his publisher, Verne’s works fell to Hetzel fils, who was much less rigorous in reining in Verne’s writing. Verne’s mother died in 1887, leaving him with multiple family responsibilities, although he attended neither her deathbed nor her funeral.<sup>427</sup> Jules Verne continued to write at a prolific rate until his death in 1905, although he no longer produced at quite the same pace he had enjoyed under the senior Hetzel’s guidance. Many of his later works

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<sup>425</sup> Butcher, 275.

<sup>426</sup> Robin, 128-129.

<sup>427</sup> Butcher, 278.

were left unpublished and were either revised by his son or left in family vaults until their release as recently as 1994.<sup>428</sup>

Regardless of his political views, Verne's *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers* was widely reprinted after the hostilities ended in order to satisfy the public's demand for a story that embodied freedom and power. Captain Nemo and his virtually indestructible submarine appealed to French readers "shaken almost as much by political chaos during the Commune's seizure of Paris as by the defeat at the hands of Prussia."<sup>429</sup> While many of Nemo's personality traits may call to mind nationalistic pride or, more specifically, the glory days of Napoléon I, the very name given to the character show Verne's unwillingness to embrace an explicit emperor-like leader. Nemo may rule his crew with an iron hand, but this "no man," as his name means in Latin, punishes any demonstration of imperial power from his enemies. Verne's anti-imperial feelings are very clear in the story, but so, too, is his obvious distaste for senseless violence and reckless actions. For Verne, the Commune would embody all of Nemo's negative characteristics, thus meriting whatever punishment befell its members.

Several of Verne's works denounce nationalistic violence, while others seem to represent favorably patriotic zealots. Captain Nemo, the lead character in *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers*, pursues his nationalistic, although hidden goals, through violent and seemingly indifferent means. The fear and horror felt by Nemo's unwitting guests are juxtaposed with the captain's calm vengeance. According to Marguerite de La Fuyë, Nemo is

l'homme de 48 transfiguré. Il pourchasse les despotes et soutient le principe des nationalités. Inflexible, il coule la frégate des oppresseurs, et, magnifique, porte des

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<sup>428</sup> *Paris au XXe siècle* is Verne's most recently published major work. It had been rejected by Hetzel during Verne's lifetime, but his family held the manuscript until recent renewed interest in the author led to its publication in 1994.

<sup>429</sup> Alkon, 67-68.



trésors aux peuples qui luttent pour leur indépendance. Ce génie des mers est de la même génération que son éditeur et son romancier.<sup>430</sup>

Freedom from despotism was a theme near and dear to both Verne and Hetzel; Nemo values it above all else. Like Verne himself, Nemo finds peace and freedom only at sea. In a quote that eerily echoes the Marquis de Sade's need for isolation, Nemo states: "Independence is possible only here! Here I recognize no master! Here I am free!"<sup>431</sup> Other classic Vernian tales, including *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* (1873) and *Voyage au centre de la Terre* (1864), show the same national pride and desire for freedom demonstrated by Nemo, illustrating the importance Verne attached to these themes.

### 3.3.2 *Le Chemin de France*

*Le Chemin de France*, while not originally considered appropriate for Hetzel's Magasin illustré d'éducation et de récréation, was eventually incorporated into Verne's monumental *Les Voyages extraordinaires* collection. Olivier Dumas considers it to be "le plus méconnu des *Voyages extraordinaires*"<sup>432</sup> and little critical attention has been given to the novella. The story itself was written during a time of immense tension in France. Within the tale, one can see disputes between religious and laic powers, imperial versus republican ideals, and strong themes of national identity and loyalty are brought into question. The very title informs the reader that the ultimate goal of the novel is to return to French soil, a struggle the characters willingly undertake.

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<sup>430</sup> Marguerite Allotte de La Fuyë, *Jules Verne, sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Hachette, 1953), 122.

<sup>431</sup> Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, trans. William Butcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 69. Sade's quote from *120 journées de Sodome* is explained in greater depth in Chapter 2, p. 59.

<sup>432</sup> Olivier Dumas, "Le Chemin de France: Un Roman méconnu," *Bulletin de la Société Jules Verne* 93 (1er trimestre 1990), 28.

The story, originally titled *Le Chemin du pays*<sup>433</sup>, was first published as a feuilleton in *Le Temps* from 31 August to 30 September 1887. Despite Hetzel's original hesitations over the work, *Chemin* sold over 10,000 copies, ranking it as Verne's twenty-eighth most popular story, leading Dumas to observe that it is "plus un ouvrage oublié qu'un roman rejeté."<sup>434</sup> Given Verne's typical fare of science fiction or children's stories, this particular tale is a bit of an aberration in that it deals with a historical representation of a France in crisis. All of Verne's major works are set near to the contemporary present, including the immediate past or future. *Chemin* was written after the chaos of the Franco-Prussian War, but Verne, like Victor Hugo, chose to set one of his stories during the Revolutionary Terror, in essence rethinking the original event in terms of contemporary events.

The French Revolution and its consequent international wars form the background to the tale of a soldier, Natalis Delpierre, visiting his sister in Belzingen, Germany in 1792. However, unlike in Victor Hugo's epic *Quatrevingt-Treize*, the Revolution itself plays a small part in *Chemin*'s intrigue. Earlier in his career, Verne had written *Le Comte de Chantelaine: Un Episode de la Révolution* (1864), which played on the Reign of Terror and a heroic counter-revolutionary. The work was immature and only appeared in serialized form. Many years later, he returned to the Revolutionary period, but this time to write a novel in which Republicans were forced to stand against pro-monarchic invasion forces from outside the country.

By 1885, Verne had matured and become more objective about the Revolution and its constructive aspects. 1789 is mentioned in the novel, but only as a reference point in the main character's career: "Avant 89, bien des gens s'imaginent qu'un simple soldat, fils de bourgeois

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<sup>433</sup> Verne letter to Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 20 octobre 1885. Cited in Dumas's *Correspondance (1863-1886)*, tome III, 342.

<sup>434</sup> Dumas, *Le Chemin de France: Un Roman méconnu*, 31.

ou de paysan, ne pouvait jamais devenir officier. C'est une erreur."<sup>435</sup> Delpierre goes on to explain how a man could rise through the ranks, although "défense d'aller plus loin," there were limits.<sup>436</sup> As a Picardie peasant, Delpierre had few career options, but his devotion to his country and his duty would allow him to rise as far as the rank of Captain before retiring from the Army. Just as Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize* portrays positive and negative aspects of both sides of the Revolution, so too does Verne's narrator make it clear that the Ancien Régime was not necessarily as bad as people might think it had been. Both men were striving to create a cohesive history of which Frenchmen could be proud.

While Verne explains that it was the practice at this time for officers to recruit men when home on leave, it is clear that young Delpierre freely volunteered to join his local regiment. Delpierre's commanding officers and even his army will change names, but his simple loyalty to the *patrie* remains consistent. He returns from military service in America in 1783, and he states that "pendant huit ans, je ne fis qu'aller de garnison en garnison,"<sup>437</sup> thus covering the period from 1783 to 1791. The intervening years are specifically mentioned, but only as markers of his service: "Nous étions à Sarrelouis en 85, à Angers en 88, en 91, en Bretagne, à Josselin, à Pontivy, à Ploërmel, à Nantes, avec le colonel Serre de Gras, en 92, à Charleville, avec le colonel de Wardner, le colonel de Lostende, le colonel La Roque, et en 93, avec le colonel Le Comte."<sup>438</sup> In reality, Delpierre served his officer, a local nobleman, and therefore the King until the Revolution. With the advent of the Revolution, he changes perhaps his uniform and regiment, but the basic military structure he has known throughout his career stays the same and his

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<sup>435</sup> Jules Verne, *Le Chemin de France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1935), 6.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. Verne was easily able to research the specifics of Delpierre's military career by using a book that had been published by his publishing house and which clearly lists all of the posts and commanders likely for a cavalry soldier during this time. See *Histoire de la Cavalerie Française : Tome deuxième*, by le Général J. Susane (Paris : Librairie J. Hetzel, 1874), 121-128.

allegiance to his homeland continues unchanged. It is not until the moment of his story in 1792 that he seems to be truly affected by the Revolution, but even after this grand event, he continues to serve as a loyal soldier. Not only is the domestic upheaval of 1789-1792 not mentioned in great detail, the narrator in essence skips over most of the tumultuous period, stating only that he was a simple soldier and frequently moved about the country during this time. Verne spends no time exploring the philosophical and ethical issues that might have arisen in this situation. Natalis Delpierre is a peasant who became a soldier, and Verne dismisses it as unrealistic to think that Delpierre would have spent much time waxing philosophical about an event out of his control. In reality, the narrator's indifference is carefully created as part of Verne's strategy to show modern France's common heritage and how the country has repeatedly overcome obstacles, including multiple régime changes.

Jules Verne provides a unique perspective to the outbreak of war with his portrait of a French soldier behind enemy lines during a time of crisis. His main character, however, takes the momentous events in stride, accepting things as they come, just like his peasant roots would indicate. The narrator repeatedly points out that he has never understood politics, but he is fiercely loyal to the *patrie* and her army. In 1831, retired Captain Delpierre is a simple soldier who recounts one of the more interesting events of his life. He says that he is writing the story to clear up any confusion among his friends who have a tendency to embellish or distort his tale. Verne is able to give his narrator the historical perspective of having survived the Revolution, Napoléon, the Restoration, and the beginning of the July Monarchy. Both the narrator and the text will provide a historical buffer for contemporary readers of the novel, none of whom would have experienced the Revolution first-hand.

The author spends a few pages setting up Delpierre's background, but quickly launches into his journey to Prussia to visit his sister and the Kellers, her employer's family. Most of the characters in the book are originally from France, or they have very close ties to the country. Many of the families relocated to Prussian territory after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Verne is clear about the ongoing detrimental effects of this seventeenth-century political decision, describing how Frenchmen were slowly absorbed into Prussia:

on se dit que l'on reviendra au pays lorsque les circonstances le permettront. Mais, en attendant, on s'installe à l'étranger. De nouvelles relations s'établissent, de nouveaux intérêts se créent. Les années s'écoulent, et puis l'on reste! Et cela est arrivé pour beaucoup au détriment de la France !<sup>439</sup>

Although the families eagerly awaited the opportunity to return to France once religious freedom was re-established, this turned out to be such a long process that their lives became intertwined with their new homes. The exiled Protestant merchants and artists took with them skills that would now enrich England, the Netherlands, and Germany, all at the expense of their true homeland, France. In the Kellers' case, they cannot return to France due to a pending civil lawsuit with the Prussian government. If not for this legal action, it is clear that the family would return to its homeland: Jean Keller has been raised *à la française*, his fiancée is French, the family speaks only French at home, and the Revolution has created a sense of religious freedom not seen in France for over one hundred years. Verne repeatedly plays on the theme of multiple homelands and mixed loyalties throughout the novel. The Kellers, Delpierre, his sister, and the de Luranays all endure suffering as a result of their desire to return to their emotional homeland. It is this conflict that torments the characters, more so than the physical threat of war facing them.

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<sup>439</sup> *Chemin*, 20.

The main action of *Le Chemin de France* takes place when war is declared while the lead character is in Prussian territory. Many of Verne's stories use travel as a theme, so it is not surprising that the author chose to set the majority of his tales outside of the French purview. Paul Alkon finds that travel in fictional literature "provides new vantage points for utopian or dystopian commentary on life at home in the reader's city."<sup>440</sup> Verne's decision not to use France as his primary setting is a definite comment on the country's recent upheavals. While *Le Chemin de France* is certainly one of Verne's most patriotic works, William Butcher correctly points out that the story "stops short at the frontier."<sup>441</sup> This 'national barrier' mentality is found in many of Verne's stories and may have been due in part to Hetzel's careful editing, ensuring that Verne's "innocent remarks about contemporary France"<sup>442</sup> could cause no offense. It may also have been a result of Verne's fantastical storylines, since adventures are always more interesting when set in foreign locales.

Verne had originally set his story in the town of Belzig, Germany, but Louis-Jules Hetzel felt that using the name of a real German town might be problematic.<sup>443</sup> Yielding to his new editor's concerns, Verne changed the name to the fictional Belzingen: "Si vous trouvez que pour éviter des réclamations, il faut changer le nom de Belzig, changez-la; mais, je vous ferai remarquer que dans le *Chemin de France*, il n'y a rien de désagréable pour les habitants de cette ville."<sup>444</sup> Even as he journeys to visit his sister in the fictional Belzingen, Sergeant Delpierre is aware of the potential dangers looming on the horizon. He spends the first part of his visit anxiously awaiting the announcement of war, and when it comes, Verne announces it with a

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<sup>440</sup> Alkon, 18.

<sup>441</sup> Butcher, 224.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>443</sup> Belzig is in Brandenburg, a site associated with many victory celebrations after the Franco-Prussian War.

<sup>444</sup> Verne's letter to Louis-Jules Hetzel, 24 avril 1887. Cited in Dumas *Correspondance*, 53.

simple sentence: “La Prusse venait de déclarer la guerre à la France.”<sup>445</sup> Thus starts Chapter Ten, in which the primary focus is not the war itself, but rather how this declaration might impede the upcoming nuptials between Jean Keller and Marthe de Luranay, as well as the extended family’s plan to flee to France.

### 3.3.3 *Le Chemin de France* as a Nationalist Text

As tensions mount between France and Prussia, the international situation begins to affect the families in the story. The main reason Delpierre sets out on his leave is to convince his sister to return to France with him: “Je commençais à m’inquiéter qu’elle fût hors de France, au moment où les cartes menaçaient de se brouiller. [...] En pareil cas, mieux vaut être dans son pays. Et, si ma sœur le voulait, je la ramènerais avec moi.”<sup>446</sup> Delpierre is well aware that his sister will not likely leave behind her adopted family, but he has hopes of persuading all of them of the dangers likely to arise if they stay in Prussian territory. Once they understand that war is imminent, they willingly choose to follow Delpierre back to France.

A romantic triangle becomes an international fight between Jean Keller, a German whose maternal family is French and Frantz von Grawert, a rich German soldier. The girl in question is French and has been brought to Prussia by her grandfather, who had fled France for religious reasons. Her true love has been raised to be a true Frenchman, in everything but place of birth:

il était bien Français dans l’âme, ce brave jeune homme, en qui revivait l’âme maternelle ! [...] Ses premiers mots d’enfant, il les avait bégayés en français. Ce n’était pas « mama » qu’il avait dit, c’était « maman ! » [...]

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<sup>445</sup> *Chemin*, 56. Of course, France had already declared war on Prussia, but Verne chose to set Prussia up as a merciless aggressor, declaring war on a peaceful nation.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

L'enfance du petit Jean fut donc bercée aux chansons de notre pays. Son père ne songea jamais à s'y opposer. Au contraire. N'était-ce pas la langue de ses ancêtres, cette langue lorraine, si française, et dont le voisinage de la frontière germanique n'a point altéré la pureté ?<sup>447</sup>

It is noteworthy that Jean's father never objected to his son being raised as a de facto expatriate Frenchman, but his own family had only left France because of the Edict of Nantes, not for reasons of their own choosing. Verne also notes that strong French ties were to be expected in the father's regional homeland of Lorraine, a territory in much dispute, from the Revolution until World War II.

Not surprisingly, the man with French roots is cast as the romantic hero deserving of the fair maiden's love, while the German is the villain of the story. Although the tension between the two protagonists culminates in a duel, the onset of war results in the cancellation of the fight. Due to Jean's forced enlistment into the Prussian army, Lieutenant von Grawert is unable to fight a fellow soldier. Once again couching questions of honor in terms of nationality, the narrator exclaims: "il me semble qu'un officier français n'aurait pas agi de la sorte! Il eût rendu raison à l'homme qu'il avait offensé, insulté mortellement!"<sup>448</sup> Verne seemingly ignores the fact that he had already told his readers that Prussian military law forbids the duel, preferring to cast von Grawert in terms of a man lacking in honor. As a Prussian soldier, Jean will be under the command of his rival's father, Colonel von Grawert, the very man who had first approached M. de Luranay about uniting their two children in marriage. He is politely but firmly rebuffed and immediately becomes an enemy to the lovers.

The storyline advances as the Kellers, de Luranays, Delpierre, and his sister decide to leave Prussia, in part to escape the oncoming war, but mostly to avoid the dangers posed by the

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 20-21

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 70.



von Grawerts. It is well known among Jean Keller's fellow soldiers that he is unwilling to fight France because he feels himself to be French, despite the circumstances of his birth. Until the outbreak of war, this sentiment was accepted and even admired in his village. After being forcibly drafted into the Prussian army, Keller retaliates against Frantz von Grawert's abuse and is condemned to death for striking his commanding officer. His escape leads to the posting of a large bounty, but he is able to rejoin his friends and family for their flight to France. The majority of the short novel is devoted to the difficulties they encounter on the way. Although the journey is harsh, it is not until they reach the border that the action reaches its apex. Just as the group reaches French soil, M. Jean and Delpierre are arrested by occupying German troops led by the von Grawerts.

The grand denouement of the story comes just as the two men are about to be executed. Mme Keller arrives waiving a newspaper and shouting "Français ... il est Français"<sup>449</sup> just as French troops pour into the site. In a neat twist of fate, Jean Keller has been declared French, thus saving him from the court martial's judgment. In order to save itself from paying the Keller family the money it was due, the Prussian government found that Jean's ancestors had never truly been naturalized, and so, the entire family was technically French. It is with tears of great joy that Mme Keller says to her son: "Maintenant, Jean, on ne te forcera plus à te battre contre la France!" to which he passionately replies: "Non, mère ... C'est maintenant mon droit et mon devoir de me battre pour elle!"<sup>450</sup> While Mme Keller nearly died of grief thinking of her son fighting against her native country, she is now filled with nothing but pride that he will be facing the same danger as a soldier of France.

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

The reassignment of the family's citizenship is also a comment about the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, which created situations like that of the Kellers, a French family living in German territory. The region had been captured during the Franco-Prussian War, and remained in German hands until the end of World War I, briefly returning to Germany during World War II. At the time Verne wrote the novel, the recent theft of Alsace-Lorraine was still vivid in most Frenchmen's minds. Even as the characters believe that they have safely crossed into France, they suddenly realize that foreign troops had beaten them to the frontier: "oui! c'était bien le sol français que nos pieds foulaient alors, mais le sol français occupé par des soldats étrangers."<sup>451</sup> The group is forced to negotiate around the enemy in order to reach French troops who are entrenched farther inland. Once they reach true French territory, however, they will receive aid from occasional peasants and, eventually, the French army.

The narrator sums up the sense of rage and frustration surrounding the Alsace-Lorraine situation: "est-ce que les gens qui nous faisaient tant de mal ne le paieraient pas un jour ou l'autre?"<sup>452</sup> This particular quote is provoked by the Prussian army forcing the pseudo-French Jean Keller into military service, thus disrupting the intended nuptials with his French bride. It is not much of a stretch to see the parallel to German aggression tearing away a beloved portion of *la patrie*, preventing the region's union with France. The eventual marriage of the two can easily be read as a sign of hope for the reinstatement of the region. The newlywed bride declares: "nous sommes unis devant Dieu! ... Que Dieu nous conduise!"<sup>453</sup> While these are typical statements for a wedding, the "nous" is also easily transferred to the reunification of the stolen territories with the rest of France.

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 101.

Of course, the abrupt reversal of Jean Keller's citizenship comes only as a result of Prussia's greed and France's newfound religious tolerance. The Constitution of 1791 had extended leniency to Jews and Protestants, while nationalizing Roman Catholic Church property. In 1792, the Constituent Assembly finally resolved the Calas Affair, to the benefit of French Protestants.<sup>454</sup> Thanks to Prussia denying his family's claim to German citizenship, Jean becomes a de facto Frenchman, entitled to all the rights and privileges associated with his new status. With this twist, Verne neatly eliminates the reason for which the French families had emigrated in the first place. The author virtually ignores the bloody violence associated with the Revolution, particularly in its foreign wars; rather, he focuses exclusively on the benefits the Kellers will now enjoy as legitimate French *citoyens*. From beginning to end, the story reads as a goodwill campaign to promote French values: the narrator is a peasant who travels the world and attains the rank of Captain while serving his country; the Kellers are finally able to realize their lifelong dream of repatriating to France; religious tolerance is extended to all who wish to return to their homeland; and the Germans are defeated on a personal and national level.

In order to highlight French values and contrast them to those of the Prussians, Verne makes copious use of examples to illuminate national characteristics. When describing the Prussians, he almost exclusively uses negative terms: “la terrible discipline prussienne”<sup>455</sup> and “le soleil, qui ne pouvait nous tromper, car lui, du moins, n'est pas d'origine allemande,”<sup>456</sup> being among his comments on Prussian character. The Frenchmen are portrayed as living up to

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<sup>454</sup> The Calas Affair took place in 1762, when Protestant Jean Calas was executed in Toulouse for murdering his son, who wished to convert to Catholicism. By 1765, it had been discovered that his conviction was due almost exclusively to anti-Protestant sentiment, rather than the actual facts of the case. Despite the reversal of the verdict, Calas had already been executed and his family continued to bear the brunt of his shame. The 1792 law declared “punishment for crime to be a precise and personal matter,” meaning that a family should not be judged for one member's actions. This concept rapidly extended to the Protestant community at large, paving the way for widespread acceptance in mainstream France. Bosher, 141.

<sup>455</sup> *Chemin*, 68.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

the ideals of the Revolution. Jean displays his fascination and admiration for the Revolution, as well as his contempt for German prejudices when he declares: “la révolution de 89 a proclamé l’égalité en France, et elle fera disparaître les vieux préjugés. Chez vous, maintenant, chacun est l’égal de tous. [...] L’égalité ! C’est un mot que l’Allemagne ne connaît pas encore !”<sup>457</sup> He does not seem to hold out hope that Germany will soon see the wisdom of acknowledging this sort of equality among its own people, but he is determined to help educate Natalis to ensure his rightful place in this new French society.

While the Germans in the story are portrayed as disciplined but not tolerant, even the simplest Frenchman seems to be bred with Enlightenment ideals. Once the group reaches the frontier, they are aided by simple peasants who themselves have little resources to spare, giving M. Jean “un avant-goût du bon cœur des Français.”<sup>458</sup> As the two main characters are about to be shot by Prussian troops, Delpierre cries out “Vive la France!” and the still-German Keller replies “Vive la France!”<sup>459</sup> It is not until the last few pages of the novel that Jean Keller learns that he is in reality French, so this moment is an example of others embracing French ideals for no other reason than their purity and moral correctness. Ironically, his miraculous change in citizenship comes not from anything to do with the war or his insubordination in the army; rather, it is based on a financial decision on behalf of the Prussian government to nullify a family lawsuit. Although the Kellers are cheated out of the money due them, there is nothing but a sense of relief and joy that all of the characters can now proudly proclaim their French legal status.

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 137.

### 3.3.4 Fear and Loyalty in *Le Chemin de France*

*Le Chemin de France* continues Jules Verne's tradition of representing the chaos of the time, while also dealing with themes of fear, power, and loyalty to the *patrie*. The story opens with a simple soldier who is basically oblivious to the historical events taking place around him. Natalis Delpierre remains filled with simplistic hope throughout the novel, even when he is faced with frightening obstacles. He is determined to safely escort his friends and family back to France at all costs. Delpierre seems quite heroic in the face of his friends' fear and inability to understand the events occurring around them. In reality, Verne goes to great lengths to describe Delpierre's humble background and peasant outlooks. For him, it is not politics that matter; rather, it is only loyalty to family and the *patrie* that deserves true devotion. Early in the tale, his sister asks him if he has left behind anyone important. He replies with "La patrie, ma sœur! Et faut-il autre chose à un soldat?"<sup>460</sup> He displays unrelenting loyalty to his friends and family, all of whom represent the best of France, be it a kingdom, republic, or empire at any given moment.

The fear presented in the tale springs from the inability of the French families living on German soil to return to their true homeland. Although there are battles being waged all around the travelers, Verne neatly avoids going into great detail about the military situation. He provides a list of engagements and military tactics, the likes of which would interest a retired soldier like his narrator. However, the battles do not directly impact the family until the very end of the tale. It is instead the fear that M. Jean will be punished for winning the heart of a contested French female, and thus infuriating a Prussian soldier, that drives the family to despair.

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 22.

During his separation from his friends and family, they live in constant horror that he will be abused and perhaps killed by his tormentor, the spurned Prussian soldier.

Power is abused at two levels in the story. First, it is controlled by local military officials. Jean Keller's fiancée sparked the interest of a Prussian lieutenant, whose father is in charge of the regiments in the area. Father and son will use all of their military power and local influence to destroy the Keller family. Rather than fight a duel with Jean over the girl, von Grawert arranges to have him drafted into the army, where Jean will be at the mercy of his family's unit. Once he is under the control of the von Grawerts, both physically and legally, they will attempt to break him, but his love for Mlle Marthe and France will prove to be too strong for the Prussians to triumph. In the end, Jean defeats his Prussian nemesis and will enroll in the French Army to battle his former country.

Through an abuse of both French and Prussian power, the families have been separated from their rightful homelands. As a result of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, many French subjects were forced to emigrate to other lands. Seventeenth-century France had forced the otherwise loyal Protestants to leave their homes, but they still retained a yearning to return that lasted for many years. On the Prussian side, in a bid to keep these families' resources, officials in the story benefiting from their skills and confiscated their goods, making it financially impossible for them to return to France. For Verne's characters, the desire to return to France eventually overcomes any financial concerns, and the families decide to flee Germany.

The birth of the French Republic is the impetus behind all of the action in the story. The death of the monarchy causes war to be declared on both sides. Verne does not explore the political reasoning behind the decisions to go to war. Instead, he relates how this decision impacted the lives of a fictional French soldier and his family. The Franco-German family is

finally able to fulfill their deepest desires and return to France, thanks to the new Republic's policy of increased religious tolerance. Jean Keller will be welcomed into the French Army, whereupon he will happily devote himself to upholding French ideals. Of course, Verne neatly places his story in 1792, not allowing any hint of future problems like the Law of Suspects to shadow Jean's potential future. The reader is left to assume that the advent of the Republic effectively cured all of the characters' problems, and enabled them to live long, happy, and productive lives as French citizens.

### 3.3.5 Jules Verne's Legacy

While much Vernian criticism is directed toward his work as a science fiction writer, there is little commentary devoted to his historical or nationalistic tales. *Le Chemin de France* has not inspired much critical work to date, but we can easily apply general Verne criticism, as well as theories of nationalism and historical representation. The story is, according to Verne "un roman très patriotique, qui est de nature, je pense, à plaire aux lecteurs."<sup>461</sup> The author had thus intended the tale to have a patriotic sentiment, which clearly comes through in the text. The work represents a growing sense of hostility toward German aggression, which would explode with the advent of World War I. Because *Chemin* itself has received so little critical notice, it is necessary to examine criticism of his other works and to apply some of these comments to the work in question.

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<sup>461</sup> Verne letter to Louis-Jules Hetzel, 14 octobre 1886. Cited in Dumas's *Correspondance (1866-1896)*, tome I, 36.

Andrew Martin finds that “the powerful thrust of empire in Verne always attracts the countervailing force of revolt.”<sup>462</sup> Many of Verne’s works portray a hero in rebellion against the machinations of a cold-hearted imperial power. Even in *Le Chemin de France*, a story about a family caught between two imperial powers, France is never described as a fearsome political entity. Rather, the country is continuously referred to in sentimental terms: “patrie” and “ancêtres” are terms that are used throughout the story to evoke emotional responses on the part of the reader. Twice in the novel, French troops are rallied with the cry “la patrie est en danger,”<sup>463</sup> resulting in instant and ferocious defense on the part of soldiers and citizens alike. Germany and Prussia, however, are only referred to by their proper names, since the characters have never felt truly connected to the region in which they lived. It was only the unfortunate situation caused by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes that forced these loyal Frenchmen to flee their homes in the first place, and most of them have waited for generations to return to France.

Although Verne was indeed attached to the idea of demonstrating the ill-effects of empire, it must be remembered that his publisher, Pierre-Jules Hetzel, himself an ardent Republican, was also very much a man of business. The *Voyages extraordinaires* series was intended as entertainment, but it also fulfilled didactic and patriotic purposes during a time when French nationalism was once again in crisis. Hetzel and Verne shared similar goals for the works. As Esther Kanipe notes, Hetzel “was attempting to inspire a rebirth of the pride and spirit which he felt had been lost during the Second Empire.”<sup>464</sup> Despite the lack of overt patriotism in most of his stories, Verne did want to help re-establish French pride after the country’s shameful

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<sup>462</sup> Andrew Martin, *The Mask of the Prophet: The Extraordinary Fictions of Jules Verne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 22.

<sup>463</sup> *Chemin*, 70 and 96.

<sup>464</sup> Kanipe, 80.



defeats under the Second Empire. With the successful establishment of the Third Republic, France could immediately begin to overcome any regrettable decisions made by the Empire and to reverse the losses incurred in 1870. This sentiment of *revanchisme* stemming from Franco-German conflicts will also appear later in the two world wars.

After being shot by his nephew and the death of his trusted friend and publisher in 1886, Jules Verne continued to produce copious amounts of writing, if not perhaps with the same heart he had previously displayed. From 1886 until his death in 1905, he produced at least one novel per year, with the earlier years seeing at least two. As mentioned earlier, many of his later works were both darker and more nationalistic in spirit. He continued to criticize imperial behavior and his characters tend to portray deep loyalty either to their homelands or to their causes.

Entire generations around the world have grown up reading or watching the adventures of Verne's characters. While he is still remembered as the pioneer of science fiction writing, scholars have begun to read his other works in a new light. With the centennial of his death, Vernian scholarship is seeing increased attention. Included in this renewed interest is a serious focus on Verne as a nationalistic and patriotic writer who lived through times of great turmoil, but who always believed in progress to pull the country through its difficulties.

### **3.4 HUGO, VERNE, AND REVOLUTION**

Victor Hugo and Jules Verne were among the best-known authors of the nineteenth century, and they both chose to undertake the monumental task of helping the nation ease into a stable and secure régime after generations of chaos. They clung to the ideal of the Republic as a means of dealing with their difficult contemporary situation and they chose to create stories set in the wars

of the French Revolution during a moment of crisis in their own time. For them, the birth of the First Republic was the Revolution's greatest positive impact. Immediately following the collapse of the Second Empire, the Paris Commune was established, rekindling memories of another chaotic time in French history. With the First Empire coming so tightly on the heels of the Terror, both authors perhaps felt a sense of urgency to reinforce the Republic as the Commune's rightful successor, rather than chance the reestablishment of an empire or monarchy.

In Victor Hugo's novel, the nineteenth-century Commune was portrayed in the reenactment of the Revolutionary Terror. Both régimes were seen as lawless rebellions by their opponents, but the movements were based in their leaders' desires to defend their country and further national and social ideals. In *Quatrevingt-Treize*, Hugo limits his setting primarily to the struggles in the Vendée, but frequent parallels are drawn between the plight of the novel's characters and contemporary events. By setting his story during the Revolution, he is able to provide some historical distance, allowing his audience the space necessary to understand the events and a bit of respite from their current situation. The country had already survived one cataclysmic event in the eighteenth century; Hugo seems determined to remind his readers that it can survive this one, too by maintaining its dignity and compassion.

Jules Verne also chose to set one of his *Voyages extraordinaires* stories during the Revolution. *Le Chemin de France* is set at the outbreak of war with Prussia in 1792. Verne thus avoids any sticky political discussions of the Terror, but firmly embroils his characters in a nationalist-driven plot. While there are no explicit mentions of contemporary political difficulties, there is a multitude of patriotic references, along with a less than flattering portrayal of the Prussian people and army, effectively shifting the conflict from an internal French fight to an international conflict between Frenchmen and other countries. His story occurs just as the

First Republic is being established, much to the dismay of other European powers. In reality, Verne had just lived through the collapse of the Second Empire and was writing during the re-establishment of the Republic, which was, for him, the only legitimate form of government for contemporary France.

*Quatrevingt-Treize* and *Le Chemin de France* are set in wartime Revolutionary France, with battle scenes involving foreign aggression. Of course, in the case of *Quatrevingt-Treize*, one of the novel's protagonists fights along side the British invasion force, but the Romantic hero of the story is a fiercely loyal Revolutionary officer. In *Chemin*, Verne is much more straightforward – his only heroic characters are without question Frenchmen who are loyal to the *patrie* above all else. While Verne's story is set almost exclusively outside of France, all of his positive characters live as Frenchmen in their hearts, yearning for nothing more than to serve their emotional homeland.

While Hugo and Verne's ideals of what the French Republic should be might have differed, both authors used their stories to build a base of memories for the Third Republic. Having survived multiple régime changes in their lives, they focused on stories that show how a bloody past can be redeemed. With the Revolution as a backdrop, both novels recount stories of personal heroism and intense loyalty to the *patrie* in the face of overwhelming odds. Given the horrific events surrounding the end of the Second Empire, the need to portray triumph in the face of the country's darkest hour was perhaps axiomatic.

#### **4.0 THE NATION IN DANGER: CALLS TO ACTION IN JEAN-PAUL SARTRE AND MARC BLOCH.**

“Our literary monuments resound with echoes of the past.”  
- Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*

At key moments in its history, France has faced not only external threat, but internal schisms that have threatened the very fabric of the nation. The Revolutionary wars were conducted against international enemies on foreign soil, as well as ideologically opposed Frenchmen in local communes. The most destructive internal battles of this period were waged in the eastern Vendée region, where the Revolution continues to be a divisive issue.<sup>465</sup> Generations later, the country once again faced the issue of divided loyalties when the Paris Commune created deep rifts between its advocates and opponents. Among the advocates were those who did not condone the Commune's actions, but they still pushed for forgiveness and acceptance of its participants. Leading figures like Victor Hugo worked tirelessly to offer amnesty to survivors of the Commune.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on events that led up to the Occupation of 1940 and that helped to establish the mood of France in the mid-twentieth century. The eighteenth and

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<sup>465</sup> For recent discussions of the Vendée, see David Andress, *The French Revolution and the People* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004) and Edward J. Woell, *Small-town Martyrs and Murderers: Religious Revolution and Counterrevolution in Western France, 1774-1914* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), among others.

nineteenth centuries played witness to two of France's greatest moments of crisis, and future generations were raised on stories of French heroics during the Revolution and the need to reclaim Alsace-Lorraine from the Teutonic barbarians who held the region. Many aspects of the previous two centuries were to be repeated during the Second World War, including German invasion and internal division. The splitting of France into two zones, both areas, in reality, under Nazi control, was a monumental crisis for the French nation.

The literature that emerged from the period of initial occupation shows a sense of bewilderment, but also a strong need to understand what had happened, so that it could be overcome and put behind the country. Most established writers in 1940 were stunned into silence, unable to react and waiting for events to give them a direction. France's initial defeat became a moment of absolute uncertainty. Two texts in particular stand out during this chaos for their willingness to come to terms with ideas of French nationalism in 1940. I have chosen Jean-Paul Sartre's little-known Nativity play, *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre* (1940) and Marc Bloch's personal interpretation of the events leading to France's defeat, *L'Étrange défaite: Témoignage écrit en 1940* (1946, posthumous) for the focus of this chapter. These texts serve as two very different forms of political testimony, with Sartre urging action and Bloch demanding reflection. A non-fiction text, Bloch's *L'Étrange défaite* bridges the gap between historical and literary accounts of the time, highlighting the function of memory in both genres. Both men sought a better future for the nation, although their hopes varied from an immediate response to the future generation's responsibilities.

## 4.1 THE THIRD REPUBLIC FALLS

Despite a few attempts to restore a monarchy in France, the Third Republic was widely accepted as the country's governing force. After its establishment following the fall of the Second Empire, the Republic's many leaders increasingly worked toward instilling republicanism in its citizens. When President MacMahon, a monarchist, dissolved the parliament on 16 May 1877 in hopes of halting the growing support for the Republic, he was accused of attempting a coup d'état, effectively killing any possibility of re-establishing the monarchy in France.<sup>466</sup> The Third Republic would go on to become France's longest-lived republic to date, only ending with the German invasion. However, the government was continuously the subject of debate, even within groups that supported the Republic. These issues all had an impact on the destiny of France leading up to the Occupation in 1940.

Despite the outward stability of maintaining a continuous republican régime, France was by no means immune to political crises in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A series of events, including problems with colonial territories, multiple religious and class divisions in the military, and increased international conflicts, created a highly unstable climate in Europe, deeply affecting France on both internal and external fronts. A prime example of the country's internal political insecurity comes in the form of the Boulanger crisis. General Boulanger, a popular minister of war under President Clemenceau, had attained so much power and favor with the people that he was seen as a potential challenger to the government. In order to mitigate his popularity, the general was sent to outposts, but he resigned his post to continue his political campaigns. After winning the legislative election in Paris in 1889, the government tried to

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<sup>466</sup> Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France, Vol. 3: 1871-1962* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 14-15.

convict him for treason, but he fled into exile and eventually committed suicide in 1891. Although the fact that he could have presented a serious challenge to the current government in national elections is important, it was perhaps his political platform that caused the most concern for republicans. Nicknamed “General Revanche,”<sup>467</sup> he supported *Revanche*, *Révision*, and *Restauration*, meaning that he sought revenge on Germany for recent defeats, a revision of the current constitution, and a return to the monarchy. All three of these principles were seen as dangerous to France’s hard-won stability after the disastrous Franco-Prussian War, and were to be avoided at all costs for the foreseeable future. Of course, after 1871, Germany would continue to occupy a prime place in French foreign policy for many generations to come.

The next major crisis to rock the young Republic was the Dreyfus Affair, one of the most famous political scandals in modern times. In November, 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a young French officer of Jewish origin, was convicted of treason for spying for Germany. The Dreyfus family had been wealthy Alsatian Jews who chose French citizenship in 1871, causing many to doubt the captain’s loyalties.<sup>468</sup> His conviction was quickly revealed as unjust, when in 1896, evidence was brought to light clearing his name and implicating the real culprit. However, the guilty party was acquitted and documents were falsified to further implicate Dreyfus. French intellectuals, led by Emile Zola, began a concerted effort to expose the political machinations behind the trial. The resulting furor divided the country for many years, and exposed a strong vein of anti-Jewish sentiment present throughout French society. Thanks in large part to his *cause célèbre* status, Dreyfus was exonerated and reinstated to the French Army in 1906, going on to serve in World War I., but the anti-Semitism the scandal revealed continued to plague the country for many years.

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<sup>467</sup> Herbert Tint, *The Decline of French Patriotism, 1870-1940* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 55.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

France enjoyed several years of relative quiet after the Dreyfus Affair. Political divisions within the country still existed, but none of them were seen as a serious threat to the Republic's well-being. One of the most vocal political groups was the Action Française, founded during the Dreyfus Affair. This particular subject was such a lightning rod for the group that as late as 1924, Action Française commissioned a republication of the *Précis de l'Affaire Dreyfus*, which became the standard reference for anti-Dreyfusards.<sup>469</sup> Action Française was a right-wing movement with a strong anti-Semitic and nationalist platform. They attacked leftist groups that supported Dreyfus and worked toward a negotiated peace to end the War. Interestingly, included in these left-wing organizations was the minor journal, *Le Bonnet Rouge*, reminiscent of Revolutionary fighters, and revived in Victor Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize*.<sup>470</sup> Although the Action Française claimed to support restoration of the monarchy, returning the king to his throne seems to be more of a rallying point than an actual goal: "on a closer inspection, one cannot help asking whether the royalism of the Action Française was ever more than a stalking-horse for different and more sinister designs."<sup>471</sup> As the group's power declined, its members were increasingly drawn to other right-wing organizations, including Vichy and collaborationist parties.

Action Française's ideology was intended to counter the Third Republic, which was considered corrupt and too centralized, with many of its members would become collaborators as a result of their anti-Republican sentiments. Among the group's more notable members were Charles Maurras, Léon Daudet, and Robert Brasillach. In *Les Captifs* (1940), Brasillach uses the

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<sup>469</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966), 90.

<sup>470</sup> Cobban, 115. See the in-depth discussion of the *Bonnet Rouge* in Chapter 3, p. 152.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.



term “Year One of the National Revolution,”<sup>472</sup> tying Vichy to the Revolutionary calendar. Vichy’s official ideological program was known as “La Révolution Nationale,” although the Pétain government was at odds with almost everything the French Revolution represented.

Action Française sought a return to a pre-Revolutionary culture of provincial privileges, deeply rooted in local history, as well as condemnation of Jews, Huguenots, Freemasons, and other domestic groups held responsible for France’s problems. Among the ‘non-French’ groups feared by Action Française were Socialists and Communists, who had recently begun to appear throughout Europe. The Ligue de l’Action Française had its members sign a pledge that states that “the Republic in France is the reign of the foreigner,”<sup>473</sup> and that only ‘pure’ Frenchmen could save the country.

As politically troublesome as Action Française was for the Third Republic, it did not pose a lasting threat to the government. The nationalism pushed by right-wing groups was directed primarily against domestic enemies and was slow to develop in regards to other countries.<sup>474</sup> As states around France became increasingly involved in Fascism and Communism, French nationalists sought to push their country into international prominence. After 1871, France quickly regained its position among world leaders and even began to expand colonial operations around the globe. By the end of the nineteenth century, the international community mistakenly hoped that by allowing French expansion to continue in Asia and Africa that the country would be distracted from its desire to reclaim Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>475</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, the loss of this territory was a deep blow to French national pride, and would continue to be a point of contention in both World Wars.

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<sup>472</sup> Robert Brasillach, *Les Captifs* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1974), 115.

<sup>473</sup> Tint, 151.

<sup>474</sup> Cobban, 91.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 91.

A growing sense of nationalist pride and a continued need for *revanche* primed the country for an international military engagement. As tensions mounted around the continent, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand sparked a series of events that led most of Europe into the First World War. Just one month after Ferdinand's death, SFIO (*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*) leader Jean Jaurès was assassinated by Raoul Villain, a member of the *Ligue des jeunes amis de l'Alsace-Lorraine*, a nationalist group opposed to Jaures' pacifist policies.<sup>476</sup> France had already experienced increased nationalism, due in part to the Action Française and factions like it, along with awareness of international events leading toward conflict.

Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, balance of power was a primary goal for most European nations, maintained by a network of both open and secret pacts. Many traditional alliances and rivalries were set aside during the Great War, including that of France and Britain. Germany, a longtime enemy of France, continued to wage war, while Britain joined France in a common struggle against German domination. With its defeat, Germany was made to pay heavy reparations and give up substantial territory. Alsace-Lorraine, one of the major points of contention between France and Germany was once again treated as a spoil of war, this time returning to the French. Massive reparation payments, the loss of land, and an overwhelming sense of humiliation were just some of the reasons that Germany would give for its aggression twenty years later, leading to World War II.

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<sup>476</sup> François Broche, *Jaurès: Paris, le 31 juillet 1914* (Paris: Balland, 1978), 54.

### 4.1.1 Interwar Instruction

With the establishment of the Third Republic came the push for state-controlled education. The 1881-1882 Jules Ferry Laws established free, mandatory, and laic education for all French children under the age of thirteen. Children were to be indoctrinated in the ways of good citizenship through an “education, made obligatory, free and secular” that was “thoroughly moral and patriotic.”<sup>477</sup> The Republic was seen as the summit of the struggle for French democracy, the ultimate result of the Revolution. Schools and families alike relied on texts that reinforced the purity and superiority of French nationalism. The most noteworthy of these texts was G. Bruno’s *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* (1877), which sold over seven million copies from 1877 to 1947.<sup>478</sup> The story relates the journey of two orphans who leave their home in the contested Alsace-Lorraine region in search of their French relatives. Along the way the children and their readers learn lessons of geography, science, history, and morality, among others. The readers and the children are told, on the very first page: “rien ne soutient mieux notre courage que la pensée d’un devoir à remplir,”<sup>479</sup> a statement that could refer to little other than France’s *devoir* to recover its lost territories.

Teachers in the Third Republic relied heavily on patriotic texts like *Le Tour de la France*, but the idea of positive patriotism was a subject of much debate. Immediately following the Franco-Prussian War, many educators subscribed to *revanchisme*, spurred on by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. The idea appears in many essay competitions, songs, and periodicals and was frequently used to inspire national pride in students. In one example, a

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<sup>477</sup> Barnett Singer, “From Patriots to Pacifists: The French Primary School Teachers, 1880-1940,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 3 (July, 1977), 414.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

<sup>479</sup> G. Bruno, *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* (Évreux, France: L’Imprimerie Hérissey, 2004), 5.

Breton teacher wrote a poem describing school children as both “soldats de la revanche” and “l’espoir de la France,”<sup>480</sup> linking the reclaiming of the territories to France’s future well-being.

After World War I, there was a backlash against the idea of *revanchisme*, a reaction against the incredible violence the country had just endured. France lost over 1.3 million soldiers, while just over four million men returned as *mutilés de guerre*, meaning that sixty-three percent of men aged eighteen to forty-six were dead or disabled.<sup>481</sup> These staggering figures led the country into a sincere desire for peace and renewed prosperity. Many intellectuals now believed that ‘old Germany’ had suffered under bad leaders and was only aggressive in reaction to its government. However, there was now a ‘good Germany,’ whose people could be both admired and influenced by French culture. Writers like Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, Bertrand de Jouvenel, and Raymond Aron had traveled to Germany at the invitation of the Nazi government, bringing back with them an increased appreciation of Teutonic art, culture, and people.<sup>482</sup> The writers who attended the Nuremberg Rallies at the invitation of Nazi officials were vastly different from students who studied in Germany, like Jean-Paul Sartre who went to Berlin before the war to study his academic heroes.<sup>483</sup> Both groups strongly appreciated many aspects of German culture and philosophy, but there was a huge difference in how they used these lessons for their own ideologies.

By the 1920s, overtly patriotic works came under attack from intellectuals due to their nationalistic agenda. New versions of popular national texts continued to be produced, but they downplayed or simply omitted bellicose behavior and explicit Gallic pride. For instance,

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<sup>480</sup> Singer, 415-416.

<sup>481</sup> Charles Sowerwine, *France Since 1870: Culture, Politics, and Society* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 117.

<sup>482</sup> Alan E. Steinweis and Daniel E. Rogers, eds., *The Impact of Nazism: New Perspectives on the Third Reich and Its Legacy* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 46.

<sup>483</sup> Sartre was in Berlin for the academic year 1933-1934, and thus was a witness to the rise of Hitler after his January 1933 election as Chancellor. However, Sartre chose to enclose himself in a collegiate bubble with his fellow *normaliens*, observing political events from a safe distance. See Cohen-Solal, 144-152.

educator and union leader Gaston Clémendot appealed to his colleagues to “demand the total suppression of the teaching of history in primary schools,” because “the lessons of history, as taught in schools across France, inspired hatred of foreigners, glorified the experience of battle, and laid the moral groundwork for future wars.”<sup>484</sup> After World War I, many teachers in France were convinced that the only way to avoid future losses was to eliminate the perceived atmosphere of warmongering that had led the country into its last two devastating conflicts. Some historians, including Marc Bloch, heavily criticized this loss of history in French schools. Referring to the teaching of history during the interwar period, he later noted: “parce qu’il [the teaching corps] ne veut plus regarder que le présent, ou le très proche passé, il se rend incapable de les expliquer.”<sup>485</sup> Bloch believed that the failures of the educational system were one of the major causes of the country’s wartime defeat.

#### **4.1.2 The Role of the Revolution and the Commune’s Reappearance**

By the advent of World War II, the French Revolution had, as a general rule, ceased to be a relevant reference for writers and politicians. Themes of rebellion, terror, national determinism, and war were, however, still very present in contemporary discourse. Occasional references to what was perhaps France’s most tumultuous period were to be found primarily in political discourse. Historian John Cairns notes that many writers condemned the Front Populaire as

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<sup>484</sup> Mona Siegel, “ ‘History is the Opposite of Forgetting’: The Limits of Memory and the Lessons of History in Interwar France,” *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 4 (December, 2002), 770.

<sup>485</sup> Marc Bloch, *L’Étrange défaite: Témoignage écrit en 1940* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 187.

“being something like a new Terror,”<sup>486</sup> tying the group’s policies and tactics directly to the most radical element of the Revolution.

Conservative politicians frequently played up themes associated with both the French and Russian Revolutions as a means of diminishing their opponents. French Communists were a favorite target of such attacks and were often identified with the Communards of 1871 and the Jacobins of 1793. Maurice Thorez, leader of the Parti Communiste Français from 1930 until 1964, willingly took these historical mantels, stating: “The Communists – ‘these Jacobins of the proletarian revolution’ – claim the heritage of the revolutionary energy of the Jacobins of 1793 and the Communards of 1871.”<sup>487</sup>

Robert Gildea points out that the very concept of a collaborative French government in 1940 should have gone against national pride based on the Revolution: “Guilt that the country that defined itself from the French Revolution on as the cradle of liberty should hand over power to an authoritarian regime that was a puppet of the Third Reich [...]”<sup>488</sup> Feelings of guilt engendered by Germany’s rapid victories in Eastern Europe made celebrating one of modern France’s founding tenets extremely difficult.

Even in prewar France, the situation was such that observing the Revolution’s anniversary was contentious and difficult. In contrast to 1889’s Republicans pulling together to celebrate the centennial in the face of *boulangiste* threats, 1939’s politicians were facing the much more menacing specter of Nazi domination of Europe. In the year leading up to France’s involvement in World War II, the Front Populaire lay in ruins, the Spanish Civil War had just

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<sup>486</sup> John C. Cairns, “Some Recent Historians and the ‘Strange Defeat’ of 1940,” *The Journal of Modern History* 46, no. 1 (March, 1974), 73-74.

<sup>487</sup> Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 146.

<sup>488</sup> Robert Gildea, *Mariane in Chains: Everyday Life in the French Heartland under the German Occupation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 4.

drawn to a bloody close, and Britain and France were a mere month and a half from declaring war on Germany. The government had not even agreed to stage official celebrations until three weeks before the festivities were due to begin. The program incorporated commemorations of non-controversial events, including intellectual developments stemming from the Revolution and a focus on the Fête de la Fédération, rather than the storming of the Bastille.<sup>489</sup> Vichy was to carry this removal from traditional Revolutionary symbols to extremes when it replaced *liberté, égalité, fraternité* with *travail, famille, patrie*.

The few celebrations planned for the sesquicentennial of the Revolution were cut short due to the declaration of war against Germany. Rather than focusing exclusively on the Revolution as the destruction of the Ancien Régime, the government chose to concentrate on one of the first national victories for modern France. The Battle of Valmy, which took place on 20 September 1792, was seen as the first decisive win for Revolutionary troops and a monumental step toward modern French nationalism. Immediately following the Army's victory, the monarchy was abolished and the First Republic was declared. Although it was not a typical anniversary year, the 1792 battle was to be widely fêted in 1939. The rapid advent of war in 1939 not only canceled the Valmy anniversary, but also pointed out gross differences between 1792 and 1939. Robert Gildea notes: "An examination of the myth of 1792 in each of three departments – the defense of the home of liberty, the war on enemies of the Revolution, and the universal liberating mission – finds them all waiting in 1939-1940."<sup>490</sup> Twentieth-century Frenchmen were well aware that their generation had failed to live up to their Revolutionary heritage.

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<sup>489</sup> Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 17-18.

<sup>490</sup> Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 147.

Of course, a few texts were written to coincide with the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Revolution. Among them was *Quatre-Vingt-Neuf* (1939) by Georges Lefebvre, a colleague of Marc Bloch. The work was suppressed by the Vichy government and survived primarily in English editions<sup>491</sup> until it was re-issued in French in 1970. Many reviews issued special numbers, including *Révolution française*, *Revue philosophique*, *Europe*, and *Cahiers du communisme*.<sup>492</sup> These few references to the Revolution aside, the main focus of politicians and writers became the Franco-Prussian War, an incident foremost in France's collective memory during the two world wars.

According to historian Charles Sowerwine, the Third Republic brought the Revolution to an end, by establishing "the first durable republican regime."<sup>493</sup> The defeat of the Paris Commune signaled the end of Parisian-led revolutionary insurgencies, which pre-dated the Revolution itself. The Commune of 1871, nonetheless, reappeared frequently in early World War II politics and literature. Alistair Horne notes that "the link with the Commune has never been severed,"<sup>494</sup> and this historical connection was never more clearly seen than in the first battles with Germany and the capital's subsequent occupation. As a rallying cry for political discussions, the Commune informed both the Left and the Right, as inheritors either of the resistance to the bourgeois government or of anticommunist policies, respectively. In the May 1936 election, the Front Populaire won a decisive victory and 400,000 Parisians marched on the Mur des Fédérés, amid cries of '*Vive le Front Populaire! Vive la Commune!*', while a group of soldiers from Versailles held a banner proclaiming: "The Versailles soldiery of 1871 assassinated

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<sup>491</sup> Beatrice F. Hyslop, "Georges Lefebvre, Historian," *French Historical Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1960), 271-272.

<sup>492</sup> Beatrice F. Hyslop, "Historical Publication since 1939 on the French Revolution," *The Journal of Modern History* 20, no. 3 (September, 1948), 233.

<sup>493</sup> Sowerwine, 27.

<sup>494</sup> Alistair Horne, *To Lose A Battle: France 1940*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969.



the Commune. The soldiers of Versailles in 1936 will avenge it.”<sup>495</sup> This reference to France’s devastating political divisions following the Franco-Prussian War was intended to reassure the country that the current government would seek retribution for German occupation of the capital and would harshly punish any who tried to betray the country to foreign powers. Unfortunately, within a few short years, history did indeed repeat itself at the expense of the capital.

External politics also played a large role in ending the influence of the Revolution on French decision-makers. The Communist Revolution in Russia impacted social divisions within France, creating further class fissures between supporters of the Left and the bourgeois republic. Hitler’s meteoric rise to power and his policy of expansionism after 1937 created new crises for which the Revolution and its ideals were ill-equipped to explain. The Left and the Right used these events to push for more extreme alliances, both within the country and internationally. Ideals of citizenship and universal rights tended to fade when faced with very real political and military threats to the *patrie*.

The *drôle de guerre*, or Phoney War, is a heavily criticized moment in French history, and serves as the basis of the two texts studied in this chapter. The brief war took place from September 1939’s German invasion of Poland until the May 1940 Battle of France. The War was notable for its lack of major military operations throughout Europe. Within eight months of Britain and France declaring war on Germany, the Phoney War was over, leading the German occupation of France. This period is marked by exasperation and indifference, both by military leaders and those who served under them. According to Stephen Tifft, the “*drôle de guerre* may be read not as inactivity but as a sort of obsessional neurotic symptom, a dogged repetition, by a France undead, of an obsolete fate from the First World War; the horrors of trench warfare

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<sup>495</sup> Horne, *Battle*, 65.

would be erased by a replaying in which nothing happened.”<sup>496</sup> Gisèle Sapiro sees the French defeat that marked the end of the *drôle de guerre* as opening “une véritable crise de l’identité nationale,”<sup>497</sup> a theme that will be explored in-depth in this chapter.

As France was beginning to fall to German advances, Paris was declared an “open city” by the government. This move was unprecedented in French history, and was seen as a severe blow to any attempts at French resistance. Paris’s reputation as the seat of national pride was firmly established with its stalwart opposition to German offensives during the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>498</sup> In the twentieth century, the reminder of Parisian resistance gave hope for Frenchmen, but caused anxiety for the Germans: “in 1870-1871 the war had continued in the provinces only as a result of the capital’s heroic resistance.”<sup>499</sup> The capital was expected once again to lead the country in rebellion against the foreign invaders. If the Germans could remove Paris as a rallying point, they would be in place to take control of France.

General Maxime Weygand, a Pétain appointee, who convinced many of his troops to accept the armistice rather than continue fighting, was “haunted by the precedent of the Commune”<sup>500</sup> and feared that the capital’s historical example would lead the rest of the country to revolt once again in the face of surrender to the Germans. In an effort to stave off the historical repetition, he commanded the Army to maintain internal order in the face of some “serious disturbances” in Paris,<sup>501</sup> as the capital was falling into German hands. He felt it would be easier for the rest of the country to accept occupation than to follow the Commune’s tradition of bloody rebellion.

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<sup>496</sup> Stephen Tifft, “Renoir, Farce, and the Fall of France,” *Representations* 38 (Spring, 1992), 139.

<sup>497</sup> Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1999), 11.

<sup>498</sup> See the discussion of Paris’s role in the Franco-Prussian War in Chapter 3, p. 126-127.

<sup>499</sup> Horne, *Battle*, 562.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 568.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

## 4.2 JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre was born on 21 June, 1905 to Jean-Baptiste Sartre, a French Navy officer, and Anne-Marie Schweitzer, Alsatian by origin and cousin to German Nobel prize laureate Albert Schweitzer. Sartre's father died when he was fifteen months old and he was subsequently raised by his mother and grandfather, a high school teacher of German. Mother and son returned to Alsace to live with the Schweitzers, who inculcated a strong sense of French patriotism in their grandson. Young Sartre was raised on stories of Alsatian suffering under the heavy hand of Prussia. At the age of nine, his grandfather wrote and staged a play, in which Sartre played a young Alsatian whose father had chosen to move to unoccupied France, leaving the boy to utter: "Farewell, farewell, our dear Alsace." Feeling the weight of this historical issue, the young actor apparently overdid his role, allowing his cousin to steal the show.<sup>502</sup> Among his bedtime stories was the popular series by Oncle Hansi, as noted by Annie Cohen-Solal, in which Sartre learned of German brutality in the conquered territories:

En pleine période d'occupation prussienne, rien n'a changé dans notre pays. Deux peuples, deux races continuent d'y vivre séparément sans se mêler jamais. D'un côté, l'Alsacien, fier de son patrimoine, de ses souffrances endurées ; de l'autre, l'envahisseur, bruyant et plein de morgue, cherchant, sous prétexte de germanisation, à imposer sa Kultur [...].<sup>503</sup>

His childhood filled with stories portraying Alsatian suffering, Sartre was always aware of the region's importance to France. The family's patriotism was rewarded with France's victory in World War I, which freed the Alsations from the burden of a German-imposed *Kultur*.

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<sup>502</sup> Sartre, *Les Mots*, 105-106.

<sup>503</sup> *L'Histoire d'Alsace racontée aux petits enfants* par l'oncle Hansi, cited in Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 53-54.

During his studies at the École Normale Supérieure, Sartre was strongly influenced by German philosophy, including the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Immanuel Kant, and contemporary existentialist Martin Heidegger. While a student at the École Normale Supérieure, he also met Simone de Beauvoir, who was likewise studying philosophy at the Sorbonne. Beauvoir would, of course, become Sartre's lifelong companion and the correspondence they exchanged during the war is of primary importance for understanding the author's actions at this time and, of primary importance for this study, his intentions toward *Bariona*.

After receiving his doctorate from ENS in 1929, Sartre received a stipend from the Maison Académique Française de Berlin to study German philosophy in Germany, along with several other young French intellectuals, including Henri Brunschwig, who had studied under Marc Bloch at the University of Strasbourg.<sup>504</sup> These young intellectuals represented just a small portion of Frenchmen who continued the cultural exchanges between France and Germany during the interwar period. As Annie Cohen-Solal notes: "Pour Sartre, pour Aron, comme pour les générations qui les avaient précédés, aller faire un séjour culturel outre-Rhin, c'était faire le pèlerinage essentiel, retrouver le socle de la pensée européenne, explorer les sources mêmes de leurs influences et de leurs passions."<sup>505</sup> Their generation had been raised on the drama of Goethe, the majesty of Wagner, and the philosophy of Husserl. This "pilgrimage" was their chance to soak in the land that had produced these giants.

After his sojourn in Germany, Sartre returned to teaching in Le Havre, Laon, and eventually at the Lycée Pasteur in Paris until the outbreak of World War II. He was drafted into

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<sup>504</sup> Cohen-Solal, 145-146.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 145.

the Army, where he served as a meteorologist<sup>506</sup> until his capture on 21 June, 1940. Sartre refers to the War as a life-altering experience:

The war really divided my life in two. It began when I was thirty-four and ended when I was forty and that really was the passage from youth to maturity. [...] You might say that in it, I passed from the individualism, the pure individual, of before the war to the social and to socialism. That was the real turning point of my life.<sup>507</sup>

One of the biggest influences on Sartre's passage to maturity was his imprisonment as a prisoner of war. He spent nine months imprisoned in Nancy, in the heart of Lorraine, and Trier, Germany, located on Lorraine's border.

Trier, or Trèves in French, was also the historic site where Chateaubriand and the émigré army established a camp in 1792, in order to combat the French Republican Army. The camp was designed to hold between five and ten thousand prisoners, although it sky-rocketed to almost twenty-five thousand men in early 1941.<sup>508</sup> During most of Sartre's incarceration, it held about seven thousand men, the majority of whom were French, with the remainder being French colonial troops, English, Polish, and Belgians.<sup>509</sup>

While in Trier, Sartre was able to gain entrance to the artists' building, which allowed him a much better standard of living: "je suis arrivé, visant à éviter le travail des champs pour lequel j'ai, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, peu de dons, dans le milieu inoffensif des artistes [...]."<sup>510</sup> In this barrack, he was able to spend time giving philosophical lectures on Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, among other texts. Although Heidegger was later heavily associated with Nazi politics, at the time of Sartre's capture, his work was not yet being called into question. Sartre was also able

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>507</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Sartre in the Seventies*, trans. Paul Auster and Lydia Davis (London: André Deutsch, 1967), 80-81.

<sup>508</sup> Gilbert Joseph, *Une Si Douce Occupation: Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, 1940-1994* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1991), 92.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>510</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Un théâtre de situations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 219.

to participate in other artistic and philosophical endeavors to distract his fellow prisoners. Included in this group were a few French-speaking Belgians<sup>511</sup> and Père Pierre Boisselot, who became the director of *La Vie Intellectuelle* and of Éditions du Cerf, both Christian organizations founded to help combat Action Française and Marxist ideologies.<sup>512</sup> In addition, the artist barrack included Pierre Boileau, an award-winning novelist, journalists, and numerous high school teachers.<sup>513</sup>

At the time of his imprisonment, Sartre was already established as a literary intellectual, and was rapidly accepted as a welcome addition to artists' group. While he was not yet a household name in France, and most of his fellow soldiers did not know of his work, many of the camps intellectuals had heard of him. Indeed, two of his major works, *La Nausée* and *Le Mur*, were already so popular that the Assistant Commandant of the Trier camp sought out Sartre "qui se trouvait à Berlin en 1933."<sup>514</sup> His notoriety earned him some extra privileges, including permission to stage a Nativity play for the prisoners.

Sartre threw himself into writing and staging a Christmas play, as a way to occupy the camp and to give the prisoners a purpose. As part of the Geneva Conventions, theatre was considered to be part of caring for a prisoner's mental well-being, and the artists' barrack was allowed extra ink and paper in order to produce their plays.<sup>515</sup> In a letter to Simone de Beauvoir, he makes his first mention of the project: "sachez que j'écris ma première pièce sérieuse et que je m'y donne de toute ma personne (écrivain, mettant en scène et jouant) et c'est sur *la Nativité*. N'ayez crainte, mon doux petit, je ne deviendrai pas comme Ghéon, n'ayant pas commencé

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<sup>511</sup> Sartre letter to Beauvoir, date unknown, but likely November 1940. Cited in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres, 1940-1963* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 299.

<sup>512</sup> Marius Perrin, *Avec Sartre au stalag 12 D* (Paris: Opéra Mundi, 1980), 10.

<sup>513</sup> Joseph, 69.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 66.

comme lui.”<sup>516</sup> Although Sartre is obviously excited about the play, he takes pains to reassure Beauvoir that he has not had a sudden religious conversion. “Ghéon” refers to Henri Ghéon, a French writer who regained his Catholic faith after World War I and went on to write religious tracts.<sup>517</sup> As Sartre points out to Beauvoir, he did not enter the camp as a religious man, and he has no intention of becoming one.

Interestingly, as a child, Sartre had read many stories with religious undertones, including Jules Verne’s *Michael Strogoff* (1876). The story at first fascinated him, but quickly caused him to question Christian myths: “For me, that book was poison: was it true that certain individuals were chosen? Was their path laid out for them by the highest necessities? Saintliness repelled me; in *Michael Strogoff* it fascinated me because it had donned the trappings of heroism.”<sup>518</sup> The story led Sartre to question the role of the free will in the face of religious doctrine. Many of these exact issues will show up thirty years later in *Bariona*, a play that teaches that man creates his own destiny and heroism, regardless of any divine plan.

#### 4.2.1 *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre*

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre* while imprisoned in Stalag 12 D in Trier, Germany. In order to provide hope for fellow prisoners-of-war, Sartre and several priests in his prison camp decided to stage a play to celebrate the holiday season. Sartre used over seventy actors and numerous set decorators and musicians in his theatrical event,<sup>519</sup> providing an

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<sup>516</sup> Sartre letter to Beauvoir, date unknown, but likely November 1940. Cited in *Lettres au Castor (1940-1963)*, 300.

<sup>517</sup> Henri Peyre, “Religion and Literary Scholarship in France,” *PMLA* 77, no. 4 (September, 1962), 361.

<sup>518</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 131. Sartre had read Verne’s works since early childhood. See his quote about the Bibliothèque illustrée d’éducation et de récréation in Chapter 3, p. 183.

<sup>519</sup> Joseph, 92.

occupation and temporarily better living conditions for these men. In a 1968 letter to Paul-Louis Mignon, Sartre explained his reason for choosing the Nativity as his theme:

La Nativité m'avait paru le sujet capable de réaliser l'union la plus large des chrétiens et des incroyants. Et il était convenu que je dirais ce que je voudrais. Pour moi, l'important dans cette expérience était que, prisonnier, j'allais pouvoir m'adresser aux autres prisonniers et évoquer nos problèmes communs.<sup>520</sup>

The prisoners presented a play as a diversion for their fellow inmates and as a relatively easy way to avoid censorship from the camp guards. The religious theme was likewise chosen in part to help them avoid censorship, using “symboles simples,”<sup>521</sup> in a “texte plein d'allusions à la situation du moment et parfaitement claires pour chacun de nous.”<sup>522</sup> By playing to German pride, such as through the inclusion of Wagner's Christmas music, Sartre was able to focus attention away from the play's deeper meanings: “je suppose que nos Teutons seront ravis de cet hommage à leur culture.”<sup>523</sup> In another appeal to the camp's Nazi overseers, Sartre made some of his characters into negative Jewish caricatures, exhorting his actors to use big gestures, and smearing them with dirt.<sup>524</sup> Although this may seem shocking to modern readers, it was an effective means to avoid censorship, while encouraging his audience to look beneath the surface and understand his message.

Sartre worked with several priests on the project and, given the time of year, the religious theme was a natural choice. The Nazi persecution of Jews, particularly in Eastern Europe, also made the choice of Jewish suffering a particularly powerful choice for French intellectuals. The play's setting provided an easy forum for the idea of hope, which was Sartre's main focus. The

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<sup>520</sup> *Un théâtre de situations*, 221.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>523</sup> Perrin, 91.

<sup>524</sup> Joseph, 85.



use of a religious-themed allegory allows Sartre to speak indirectly about the situation in which Europe finds itself, while sliding under the radar of German censorship.

The work was originally entitled *Bariona, ou le Jeu de la souffrance et de l'espoir*, according to one of the original manuscripts kept by Marc Bénard, a journalist and fellow prisoner.<sup>525</sup> With its first public release in 1970, the play was re-titled *Bariona, ou le fils du tonnerre*. It was modeled after a medieval mystery play, using fictional and biblical themes. The name Bariona means “son of John,” *bar* being Aramaic for “son of” and *iona* an ancient form of John. The name is seen several times in the Bible as Simon Bariona, or Simon, son of John. The title character’s name is thus easily explained. Simon was the leader of the last Jewish revolt against Rome, tying the name to both the action and the message of the play. The character’s nickname, *fils du tonnerre*, also comes from the Bible. When Jesus names his twelve apostles, he refers to James and John in the following way: “James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder).”<sup>526</sup> Jesus had wanted to travel through Samaritan territory on his way to Jerusalem, but was refused permission. In order to avenge this insult, the brothers asked “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them, as Elijah did?”<sup>527</sup> They were ever after called the sons of thunder, a proud tradition of defense that Bariona himself will eventually carry on. Sartre used biblical names and settings for his play, but he was not particularly faithful to the details. For instance, Simon Bariona would have been born around the time of the events in the play.

The action takes place in Roman-occupied Judea, just before the birth of the Christ child. Lélius, the Roman census-taker arrives to announce a drastic increase in the tribute the villagers

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>526</sup> Mark 3:17.

<sup>527</sup> Luke 9:54.

must pay to Cæsar. Lévy, a publican collaborator, summons Bariona, the local Jewish chieftain to tell him that Rome expects his cooperation in extracting more money from his followers. If the villagers refuse to pay the increased taxes, they run the risk of losing their sheep and the women being raped. Whether or not the actors and audience were anti-Semitic, they would have been very aware of the ideology's long history in France, including the Dreyfus Affair and Action Française, among others. Jews being threatened by both occupiers and local officials would have struck a familiar chord. After pleading the villagers' case, Bariona agrees to meet the new demands, but he proclaims, in one of the play's anachronistic moments, that the Romans will henceforth be deprived of workers for their factories: "je souhaite que notre exemple soit publié partout en Judée et qu'il soit à l'origine d'une religion nouvelle, la religion du néant et que les Romains demeurent les maîtres dans nos villes désertes et que notre sang retombe sur leurs têtes."<sup>528</sup> He decrees that the villagers will no longer procreate, thus ending any possibility for future Roman domination. Just after Bariona makes this declaration, his wife Sarah announces that they are at long last expecting their first child.

The same night that Bariona announces his decision to forbid procreation, an angel appears to a group of shepherds on a nearby mountain, spreading the news of Christ's birth. A skeptical Bariona immediately belittles the men's desire to believe that the Messiah has arrived. As the village vacillates, three wise men arrive, and lead Bariona's people to Bethlehem, leaving only Lélius, Bariona, and the local sorcerer. The wizard foretells the Messiah's fate, causing Bariona to determine that the child must be assassinated in order to save his people from following a faith based on non-violent resignation.

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<sup>528</sup> *Bariona ou le jeu de la douleur et de l'espoir* in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Théâtre complet* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), II, 1.

In an odd moment of collaboration, Bariona and Lélius decide to travel together to see the Christ child, taking a shortcut to Bethlehem and arriving before the rest of the village. Learning that Bariona plans to kill the child, Lélius leaves, claiming that he wants no part of infanticide, calling it an “abominable enterprise” and an “abomination.” However, Sartre once again uses the Roman official to provide a comedic moment. Acknowledging that he cannot stop Bariona from murdering the infant, he says: “Je n’ai plus assez de force pour empêcher ce meurtre; vous me couperiez la gorge par dessus le marché et il n’est pas conforme à la dignité d’un citoyen romain de coucher la nuit sur une route de Judée avec le col tranché.”<sup>529</sup> The audience would have loved both the idea of the Roman fearing the protagonist, as well as the image of Bariona killing him in a manner that “doesn’t conform to the dignity” of a Roman citizen.

Just as Bariona prepares to enter the stable, he glimpses the look of awe and love in Joseph’s eyes and cannot bring himself to commit the deed. The chieftain then waits outside while his friends and family adore the baby. Although he has set himself apart through his recent actions, the hope he sees represented in the Christ child leads him to a revelation. He will take his men into battle against Herod’s soldiers who are coming to kill all male children under the age of two. The play ends with Bariona and his men departing on their mission to save Hope by engaging the enemy and allowing the Holy Family to escape.

The play was written exclusively for the men in the Trier prison camp, and was staged only three times on 24, 25, and 26 December, 1940.<sup>530</sup> Sartre had lost his own copy of the play, but several of the men involved in its production had kept their copies. The author allowed a limited printing of five hundred copies in October 1962 for the benefit of his fellow prisoners of war. Five years later, he authorized another printing, by Elisabeth Marescot, at the request of

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<sup>529</sup> *Bariona*, VI, 1.

<sup>530</sup> John Ireland, “Freedom as Passion: Sartre’s Mystery Plays,” *Theatre Journal* 50, no. 3 (1998), 336.

scholars.<sup>531</sup> The work was only published for public consumption thirty years after its original staging, in the *Les Écrits de Sartre* (1970).

#### 4.2.2 Religious Themes in *Bariona*

Even though Sartre states that he chose a nativity theme for reasons other than its religious value, it is important to examine specific biblical references used in the play. Not all the biblical quotes in the play are associated with the Nativity, but Sartre chooses passages that would have been familiar for his audience and that help advance his message. When the villagers celebrate the news of the Messiah's arrival, they sing portions of Psalms 97 and 98 while dancing in joy. Several lines of dialogue are common quotes from the Bible, including "Paix sur la terre aux hommes de bonne volonté"<sup>532</sup> and Jesus's cry of "Mon Père, mon Père ! Pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?,"<sup>533</sup> which are used to help establish the historical atmosphere.

The village wizard predicts that Jesus will say "Rendez à César ce qui appartient à César,"<sup>534</sup> a quote from Matthew 22:21. Bariona and Lélius both take this quote to mean that the Messiah will approve of Roman taxation of Jews. In its original biblical context, the quote is actually quite ambiguous. Jesus has been asked by the Pharisees, who want to trick him into either acknowledging the legitimacy of taxes, thereby offending Jews, or denying the Romans' right to taxation, a treasonous statement. The line immediately following Jesus's answer shows that his questioners were uncertain of his true meaning: "When they heard this, they were amazed, and they left him and went away." Sartre's characters do not discuss the ambiguity of

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<sup>531</sup> J.H. Gillespie, "Christianity, Humanism, and Myth: Problems of Interpretation in Sartre's *Bariona ou le fils du tonnerre*," *Journal of European Studies* 30 (2000), 185.

<sup>532</sup> *Bariona*, III, 2 and Luke 2:14.

<sup>533</sup> *Bariona*, V, 3 and Matthew 27:46.

<sup>534</sup> *Bariona*, V, 3.

the phrase, since both men want to believe the worst about the Messiah. The audience, however, would have been aware of other politicians using this phrase as a call to rebellion against tyranny. The Marquis de Sade followed this biblical reference with a reminder that France had just won free of tyranny, and no longer needed to “rendre à César.”<sup>535</sup>

In another example of biblical parallels, Sartre has the shepherds in the fields receive the announcement of the Messiah’s birth. This event is described in Luke 2:8-20. However, in Sartre’s version, there is not a multitude of heavenly hosts; rather, his angel appears as a cold, single man who asks to share the men’s fire. While the biblical angel reassures the men not to be afraid, Sartre’s character asks “Je vous ai fait peur, n’est-ce pas?”<sup>536</sup> Although their angel is less than awe-inspiring, the men quickly accept that he has brought them life-altering news.

#### **4.2.3 *Bariona* as a Mirror of France in Chaos**

The play is set in Roman-occupied Judea and most of the action takes place in Béthaur, a small village near Hebron. The original play apparently listed the name of the village as Bethsûr, and Béthaur may well have been a misspelling as a result of the lack of references available to the prisoners.<sup>537</sup> Bethsûr is the real name of a village outside of Hebron, and the town is mentioned occasionally in the Bible. The play’s *récitant* states that “celui qui sait lire pourra, rentré chez lui, le retrouver sur une carte,”<sup>538</sup> indicating that Sartre believed it to be the correct town name.

In any case, the events of the story are fictional, so the name of the village would not have been important to Sartre. Of more importance to the story is the town’s position in the

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<sup>535</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 71 for analysis of Sade’s quote.

<sup>536</sup> *Bariona*, III, 2.

<sup>537</sup> Gillespie, 186, n. 31

<sup>538</sup> *Bariona*, prologue.

occupied territories. The conquered area is presented as inhospitable and potentially dangerous to outsiders. The first action presented in the play is the arrival of Lélius, the Roman census-taker. Lévy, the village publican, squashes a sleepy tarantula, “celle-là se traînait et dormait à moitié.”<sup>539</sup> The area is also rife with scorpions, “pareillement endormis, qui vous tueraient net, en baillant de sommeil, un homme de cent quatre vingts livres.” Lélius goes on to state: “le froid de vos montagnes peut transir un citoyen romain, mais il ne réussit pas à faire crever vos sales bêtes.”<sup>540</sup> The image of the small scorpion laying low the much larger man would have had definite appeal for the French prisoners-of-war. The message was perfectly clear – France may have been asleep up to this point, but the country was quietly capable of taking down the powerful German war machine.

#### **4.2.4 Roman Jews and French Prisoners-of-War**

The characters in *Bariona* were carefully chosen on one hand to portray both the French prisoners in need of hope and their German oppressors. On the other hand, they also present a thinly veiled criticism of Nazi policies toward Jews and Eastern Europe. The lead character begins the play as a nihilist leader, who would rather see his people die out than continue to live under Roman tyranny.

Bariona is a young, but well-respected chieftain of his village who has lived through years of high Roman taxation and watching the young people leaving to work in factories in Bethlehem, an anachronism that will be dealt with later in this chapter. After receiving the latest request for increased taxes, he fulfills his duty to his people in the only way he knows by

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid., I, 1.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

decreeing that the village will die rather than continuing to supply Rome with workers. While trying to convince his *Conseil des Anciens* of the righteousness of his decision, he asks them:

Quel destin souhaitez-vous pour vos enfants futurs? Qu'ils demeurent ici, solitaires et déplumés, l'œil fixe comme des vautours en cage? Ou bien qu'ils descendent là-bas dans les villes, pour se faire esclaves des Romains, travailler à des tarifs de famine et pour finir, peut-être, mourir sur la croix.<sup>541</sup>

As a tired and frustrated leader, he would rather see his people cease to exist than have them continue their miserable lives. It will take his wife's pregnancy, the birth of the Christ child, and much soul searching before he comes to the realization that actively fighting for the future is better than simply accepting one's fate in the form of stoic self-annihilation. Sartre shifts the focus from the present to the future, which must and can be saved.

Lélius is Bariona's main counterpart throughout the play. A Roman census-taker, he has come to Béthaur to announce a substantial increase in taxation. It is clear that the village cannot even afford what they are currently paying, but he is indifferent to the people's plight. Although Lélius is the only true Roman presence in the play, he merely provides the catalyst for the action. The crux of the problem is not truly the tax increase; rather, it is the question of resistance to tyranny and the need for hope; indeed, Simone de Beauvoir referred to *Bariona* as Sartre's "invitation à la résistance."<sup>542</sup> Lélius is presented as a typical colonizer, trying to get as much benefit as possible from the land, while maintaining docile inhabitants. He tells Bariona that: "les intérêts de votre patrie, chef, sont de laisser guider doucement ses pas [...] par la main ferme et bienveillante de Rome."<sup>543</sup> Given that the issues are far bigger than mere economic concerns, Lélius's role becomes less important as the play develops. While it is interesting that Bariona travels to Bethlehem with Lélius, Sartre only seems to give Bariona this traveling companion

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid., II, 2.

<sup>542</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 499.

<sup>543</sup> *Bariona*, I, 2.

because everyone else has left, and the Roman likely would not have joined the villagers. Once Lélius is informed of Bariona's decision to kill the infant, he leaves and is not heard from again.

The Jewish liaison and blatant collaborator, Lévy, the publican, is the first person to welcome the Roman taxman to the village. In the Bible, publicans are frequently mentioned in connection to prostitutes, drunkards, and other people of questionable morals.<sup>544</sup> As a resident of the territory, Lévy points out that the people are already near to collapse, but he quickly accepts the Roman proclamation. Indeed, he immediately thinks about what benefit the new taxes might mean for him:

- Le Publicain: C'est bien seize drachmes que vous avez dit ... ?
- Lélius: Quinze.
- Le Publicain: Oui, mais le seizième est pour mes frais.<sup>545</sup>

Lévy may well be the most hated figure in the play, because of his collaboration with the occupiers. Lélius is accepted in some ways as a given evil, but Lévy has determinedly profited from his compatriots' suffering. As a comic moment, even Lévy's gift to the Christ child is given at no cost to him. He gives the Holy Family the donkey he rode to Bethlehem, but which originally belonged to Lélius. His gift was one of the most extravagant, but it loses its appeal when presented by a man who represents every negative stereotype in the play. The Publicain defends his choice: "À celui qui vient de nous délivrer de Rome, un âne volé aux Romains ne saurait déplaire."<sup>546</sup> He feels that his stolen gift will be well-received and understood by Jesus, the future Jewish liberator. Lévy is a collaborator, forever living off the backs of his compatriots, and he can also be seen as a caricature of the greedy Jew, collecting money and giving away items that were never really his to give.

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<sup>544</sup> See Matthew, 9:1 and 11:19.

<sup>545</sup> *Bariona*, I, 1.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 5.



The sole female presence in the play comes in the character of Sarah, wife of Bariona. Sarah is first introduced just after Bariona has announced that “nous n’aurons plus commerce avec nos femmes. Nous ne voulons plus perpétuer la vie, ni prolonger les souffrances de notre race.”<sup>547</sup> She interrupts the *Conseil des Anciens* just as they are about to swear Bariona’s oath. Sarah tells her husband that they are at long last expecting their first child, but her husband urges her to terminate the pregnancy, so as to avoid bringing a child into their misery. She tries to reason with her husband and the council, but they do not listen to her appeals. Her comments do cause some hesitation, but they go on to take the pledge. Sarah becomes a sort of maternal rallying figure for the other characters. She will argue in favor of seeking out the Messiah, and she will push her husband to understand that his extraordinarily passive resistance will do nothing but harm the village. Her feminine suffering is very reminiscent of the female figure of France in Alain Chartier’s *Quadrilogue invectif* (1422) or the image of Delacroix’s *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (1830), which are representative of the long tradition of representing the nation as a woman struggling to lead her children. Sarah’s insistence on leading the village to the Holy Family and her willingness to take on Mary’s suffering show her determination to save her people. In a soliloquy, she asks God to punish her in place of the children:

moi qui suis seule sur la toute et qui n’ai pas encore d’enfant, regarde-moi puisque tu m’as choisie en cet instant pour suer l’agonie de toutes les mères. O Seigneur, je souffre et je me tords comme un ver coupé, mon angoisse est énorme et semblable à l’Océan; Seigneur je suis toutes les mères et je te dis: prends-moi les ongles, mais sauve-le! Sauve le Roi de Judée, sauve ton fils et sauve aussi nos petits.<sup>548</sup>

She is both maternal and warrior-like in her defense of the newborn Christ child and her village. It is her perseverance and unrelenting faith that will eventually inform Bariona’s ultimate choice.

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<sup>547</sup> Ibid., II, 2.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., VII, 1.

The remaining minor roles worth note are those of the wise men and the *Conseil des Anciens*. Sartre himself elected to play the role of Balthazar, whose wise words also help to decide Bariona to follow a course of action rather than remain alone in a dying village. He berates Bariona for his maudlin acceptance of his fate: “tu n’es pas ta souffrance. Quoi que tu fasses et de quelque façon que tu l’envisages, tu la dépasses infiniment, car elle est tout juste ce que tu veux qu’elle soit.”<sup>549</sup> Balthazar continues to address Bariona, but in reality turns to the audience, speaking of “liberté” and the need to maintain hope for the future: [le Christ] “vient dire aux aveugles, aux chômeurs, aux mutilés et aux prisonniers de guerre: vous ne devez pas vous abstenir de faire des enfants. Car même pour les aveugles et pour les chômeurs et pour les prisonniers de guerre et pour les mutilés, il y a de la joie.”<sup>550</sup> Repeating the word *liberté* and directly addressing his fellow prisoners make the message of the play clear – the soldiers must preserve their hope for the future.

The *Conseil des Anciens* functions as a Greek chorus, providing Bariona with a sounding board, but in reality they are willing to support whatever decisions their chieftain makes. The group is originally divided over the question of how to deal with the village’s future, much as the prisoners themselves were undoubtedly divided as to the question of how to deal with their situation. During one debate, two of the elders take opposing sides on how to respond to the Roman demands. One elder states that: “quand l’ennemi est le plus fort, je sais qu’il faut courber la tête.” He is instantly rebuked by his comrade, who notes that: “jusqu’ici nous avons cédé à la force, mais c’est assez à présent,”<sup>551</sup> suggesting that the able-bodied among them attack the Roman officials. Bariona stops the debate by announcing his decision, forcing the council to

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., VI, 6.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., II, 2.

follow his lead. The chorus undoubtedly would have appealed to the audience, who, as prisoners of war, struggled with questions of responsibility and reaction on a daily basis.

Although none of the Holy Family is ever seen on stage, the entire family has a strong influence on the characters in the play. Sarah immediately identifies with Mary, wishing that she could take her place, and yet willing to sacrifice herself and her child to keep the infant Jesus safe. Bariona is set on his plan to kill the Messiah until he sees the wonder and fear in Joseph's eyes and knows that he cannot murder the world's hope. It is, not surprisingly, Jesus who assumes the greatest importance amongst these unseen characters. He is seen as a savior of his people and a leader of Jewish resistance. The villagers rush to his side, in the hopes that he will immediately deliver them from Roman tyranny. While kneeling at his manger, they learn that Roman troops are coming to kill the child. One of the villagers hopes for divine intervention, but is told that "il n'y aura pas de miracle: le Messie est encore trop petit, il ne comprend pas encore. Il sourira à l'homme bardé de fer qui va se pencher sur son berceau pour lui percer le cœur."<sup>552</sup> Once again, Sartre points out that the men must take control of their own destinies, to save not only their own lives, but that of the Holy Family.

#### **4.2.5 *Bariona's Message of Hope***

The main message of *Bariona* is the need for Hope. The words *espoir*, *espérer*, and *espérance* are used twenty-nine times in the seven act play, with other words such as *joie*, *foi*, and *liberté* sprinkled liberally throughout the dialogue. The word *Espoir* is frequently

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid., VII, 1.

capitalized, indicating its importance as guiding maxim.<sup>553</sup> Indeed, it was highlighted as part of the original title of the play, *Bariona ou le Jeu de la souffrance et de l'espoir*. Sartre and his fellow inmates had determined that the play would need to give hope to the audience, while finding a way to avoid heavy German censorship. Sartre claimed that getting the play's message was easy and that he was able to escape "la vigilance du censeur allemand au moyen de symboles simples."<sup>554</sup> The prisoners were able to achieve their goals by cloaking much of the play's message within the biblical context, thus hiding the characters' evolving sense of revolt.

Sartre knew that one of the best ways to provide hope to his fellow prisoners was to create a few moments of levity during the performance. In addition to occasional witty banter between his characters, he also aimed some comments directly at his audience. Lélius, who is already seen as a villain, tells Bariona: "faites-nous des ouvriers et des soldats, chef, cela est votre devoir."<sup>555</sup> This line could easily have come straight from Nazi propaganda in regards to Eastern Europe. Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Sang des autres* (1945) includes themes of forced labor, as does Sartre's own *L'Âge de raison* (1945), both of which were written throughout the course of the Occupation.<sup>556</sup>

The Roman functionary's insistence that Judeans are obligated to serve Rome was met with much amusement from the men watching the play. Abbé Perrin, a priest and fellow prisoner, describes their reaction: "le mot [devoir] soulève l'hilarité de la salle."<sup>557</sup> The prisoners were equally amused by the petit bourgeois character filled with self-importance and the absolute absurdity of his thinking that the village would simply fall in with his plans.

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<sup>553</sup> See, in particular, Balthazar's speech to Bariona in Tableau IV.

<sup>554</sup> *Un théâtre de situations*, 61.

<sup>555</sup> *Bariona*, II, 4.

<sup>556</sup> Sartre finished the majority of *L'Âge de raison* by early January, 1940, but he continued to rework it throughout the war. See Sartre's letter to Beauvoir, 9 January 1940. Cited in *Lettres au Castor (1940-1963)*, 27.

<sup>557</sup> Perrin, 96.

At the beginning of the play, Bariona, as village chieftain, does not dare to give an absolute ‘no’ to Roman demands of drastically increased taxes. His only recourse is to tell the officials that “nous ne pouvons pas payer davantage” and to point out how much the village already suffers. He is well aware that he is essentially powerless in the face of Roman exigencies, and ends his meeting with the tongue-in-cheek: “je souhaite que le procureur se rappelle longtemps notre docilité.”<sup>558</sup> While his plan is to remain “docile,” he comes up with an idea that will harm the Roman Empire by killing his village, thus eliminating future soldiers, workers, and taxes.

Bariona’s plan to forbid procreation is quite literally a decision to kill hope. Future generations have long been held as the embodiment of hope, for which parents and communities strive to work. Tying Bariona’s stance more closely to Sartre’s own philosophy, Bernard J. Quinn notes that Bariona may well be striving to become the hateful emotions he is experiencing:

Je ne plierai le genou devant personne, je mettrai ma dignité dans ma haine, je tiendrai un compte exact de toutes mes souffrances et de celles des autres hommes. Je veux être le témoin et la balance de la peine de tous ; je la recueille et la garde en moi comme un blasphème. Semblable à une colonne d’injustice, je veux me dresser contre le ciel ; je mourrai seul et irréconcilié, et je veux que mon âme monte vers les étoiles telle une grande clameur de cuivre, une clameur irritée.<sup>559</sup>

Bariona’s desire to become the witness and the guardian of others’ pain makes him into a “living testimonial”<sup>560</sup> to mankind’s suffering.

The play continues to confound real life and theatrical drama in what Abbé Perrin calls an “insolite dédoublement de perspective”<sup>561</sup> when the theatrical space enters into play:

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<sup>558</sup> *Bariona*, I, 2.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.

<sup>560</sup> Bernard J. Quinn, “The Politics of Despair versus the Politics of Hope: A Look at *Bariona*, Sartre’s First *pièce engagée*,” *The French Review* 4 (Spring, 1972), 101.

Regarde les prisonniers qui sont devant toi, qui vivent dans la boue et le froid. [...] les vignes dorées de septembre, pour un prisonnier transi et couvert de vermine, c'est l'Espoir. [...] tu veux les priver de leurs vignes et de leurs champs et de l'éclat des lointaines collines, tu veux ne leur laisser que la boue et les poux et les rutabagas.<sup>562</sup>

The condition of poor villagers and camp inmates are so similar that Balthazar easily combines the two when talking to Bariona about his people's suffering. Judeans, Frenchmen, prisoners, Jewish villagers, Romans, and Nazi occupiers are mixed in time and space, showing that the issues of freedom and human dignity concern everyone.

In the role of Balthazar, Sartre chastises Bariona for his futile project. As both writer and actor for this character, Sartre's words carry significant force when Balthazar warns Bariona that he will face a desolate future if he does not stop his self-serving quest for martyrdom: "tu souffres et pourtant ton devoir est d'espérer. Ton devoir d'homme." If he continues as he has been, he is warned that "tu ne seras plus un homme, Bariona, tu ne seras plus qu'une pierre dure et noire sur la route,"<sup>563</sup> reducing him to something less than human. It is only the loss of hope that can completely destroy a man, causing him to lose everything he might hold dear. The man who keeps hope in his heart will prosper in the ways that mean the most.

Bariona's views change as the play progresses. At the beginning, he tells the *Conseil des Anciens* that: "la vie est une défaite, personne n'est victorieux et tout le monde est vaincu; tout s'est très mal passé toujours et la plus grande folie de la terre, c'est l'espoir."<sup>564</sup> However, by the end of the play, he has come to understand that hope is the only thing for which one must fight. Bariona realizes that his hatred and despair cannot exist in the vacuum he has created around himself. His only choice is to seek out his friends and family and admit that he has had a

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<sup>561</sup> Perrin, 99.

<sup>562</sup> *Bariona*, IV.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., II, 2.

revelation about the necessity of hope and revolt against the present oppression. The chieftain leads his village to their deaths in order for hope to survive, in the form of the Christ child.

The play ends as Bariona addresses the prisoners directly. Sartre downplays the religious aspects of the play in the lead character's last speech. He focuses instead on the over-arching message of hope and joy:

Et vous, les prisonniers, voici terminé ce jeu de Noël qui fut écrit pour vous. Vous n'êtes pas heureux et peut-être y en a-t-il plus d'un qui a senti dans sa bouche ce goût de fiel, ce goût âcre et salé dont je parle. Mais je crois que pour vous aussi, en ce jour de Noël, - et tous les autres jours – il y aura encore de la joie !<sup>565</sup>

The bitter taste Bariona mentions is in reference to his comments to his future child, and the disappointments he will no doubt face. Bariona tells his wife to remind their child at these moments that his father suffered, too, but that he died happy, for the future.

Sartre's decision not to focus on religious values in the play's last words is emblematic of his choices throughout the play. The focus is consistently on mankind's struggles, rather than on the miracle of the Nativity. According to Quinn, Sartre "makes his hero equal to Christ, if not even more powerful,"<sup>566</sup> as evidenced by Bariona's difficult decision of whether or not to kill the infant. Although Jesus, Mary, and Joseph figure in the play, they are never seen; rather, the blind *récitant* describes them from memory and the audience is forced to imagine the scene with him. The central family group is actually Bariona, Sarah, and their unborn child. While there are some obvious parallels established between the Holy Family and the villagers, the focus remains on the human rather than the spiritual. In the face of Bariona's decree that there should be no more children, Sarah reminds her husband of what she endured to conceive his child: "tu m'as fait saigner et j'ai souffert sur ta couche et j'ai tout accepté parce que je croyais que tu voulais un

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid., VII, 3.

<sup>566</sup> Quinn, 103.

films.”<sup>567</sup> This graphic imagery once again emphasizes the human aspect over Mary’s much easier Virgin Birth. At the end of the play, Sarah does not go into battle with the army, although she had expressed her willingness to do so. She must preserve the life of her unborn child, the future of the village.

Another way Sartre focuses the audience’s attention on the human aspect is through the use of anachronistic references to modern life. Sartre most likely borrowed this technique from Bertolt Brecht’s popular *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), which used both anachronistic references and the destruction of the “fourth wall,” or the “alienation effect,” to draw the audience into the story.<sup>568</sup> As Benjamin R. Barber notes: “what Brecht hoped to do was to create a theater in which both the actor and the audience *know* they are in some basic sense pretending.”<sup>569</sup> This intimate sense of participating in the story was exactly what Sartre hoped to create between the prisoners on stage and those in the audience, at the expense of the German guards benevolently watching the performance, but seemingly unaware of the play’s subtexts.

Drawing his audience into the conspiracy, Sartre slyly includes some anachronistic references that, at first glance, seem to be thoughtless mistakes. The stable in which Jesus is born is staged with an old bicycle in front of it, to showcase the poverty of the area.<sup>570</sup> In Tableau III, the news of the Christ child’s birth is first announced to a shepherd playing a harmonica, which is a nineteenth-century invention. The angel who informs the men of the birth complains endlessly of feeling cold and being tired, something with which the prisoners could no

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<sup>567</sup> *Bariona*, II, 3.

<sup>568</sup> The “fourth wall” is the invisible barrier between the audience and the actors, so named because this space would complete the enclosure of the stage, if it were a four-sided room. Brecht used the term “alienation effect” to explain how the audience was removed from the action.

<sup>569</sup> Benjamin R. Barber, “Rousseau and Brecht: Political Virtue and the Tragic Imagination,” in Benjamin R. Barber, Michael J. Gargas McGrath, eds., *The Artist and Political Vision* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1982), 20.

<sup>570</sup> Joseph, 91.



doubt identify. He is so physically miserable that he can barely remember his mission: “la route est longue et je ne sais plus ce que j’avais à vous dire.”<sup>571</sup> However, he gathers himself enough to overcome his own personal discomfort and to complete his task of informing the men of the Messiah’s birth.

Later in the play, Sartre slips modern terms into the characters’ dialogues. Lélius compares the Messiah to a vacuum cleaner: “ce Messie qui vide tous les villages montagnards comme un aspirateur électrique.” In the same scene, he also refers to “capitalisme,” which can be used to control the lower orders. Of course, both of these terms would have been part of the audience’s normal vocabulary, but they stand out as startlingly modern references. Sartre also aligns the suffering seen in the play with the prisoners’ current situation. As Balthazar explains to Bariona, men have high expectations of the Messiah: “ils attendent de lui qu’il chasse les Romains et les Romains ne seront pas chassés, qu’il fasse pousser des fleurs et des fruits sur le roc et le roc demeurera stérile, qu’il mette un terme à la souffrance humaine et dans deux mille ans l’on souffrira comme aujourd’hui.”<sup>572</sup> The reference to two thousand years later is obviously meant to describe the current suffering, but Balthazar’s main point is that mankind cannot rely solely on heavenly leadership to solve its problems.

One of humanity’s greatest gifts is the ability to exercise free will through meaningful choices. Sartre sees man as proving his liberty by looking beyond the selfishness of his actions: “je suis libre, je tiens mon destin entre mes mains.”<sup>573</sup> There are very few, oblique references to any sort of afterlife, as Sartre prefers his characters to concentrate on what they can do in the here and now. The God of *Bariona* does not expect resignation from his followers; rather, man

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<sup>571</sup> *Bariona*, III, 2.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 6.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, 2.

is expected to fight actively for his happiness. While God never speaks directly in the play, he is well represented by a few angels and the three Wise Men. Balthazar, one of the Wise Men and the character played by Sartre, assumes an almost omniscient role in the play, telling Bariona that: “il ne faut pas la [souffrance] ruminer, ni mettre son honneur à souffrir plus que les autres, ni non plus s’y résigner.”<sup>574</sup> After listening to Balthazar’s words of wisdom, Bariona mulls over the idea that he could truly be free: “je serais libre, libre. Libre contre Dieu et pour Dieu, contre moi-même et pour moi-même.”<sup>575</sup> The focus here, as throughout the play, is on human potential, rather than spiritual mythology.

All of these examples show a very typical Sartrean message: man is free and he must face his freedom from authority in order to become a moral being. According to Sartre, man’s life is not pre-destined and he is capable of impacting and changing the events that surround him. Sartre had made this stance clear just before the War, in *Les Mouches*: “Quand une fois la liberté a explosé dans une âme d’homme, les dieux ne peuvent plus rien contre cet homme-là. Car c’est une affaire d’hommes, et c’est aux autres hommes – à eux seuls – qu’il appartient de le laisser courir ou de l’étrangler.”<sup>576</sup> Once authority is confronted and freedom is acknowledged, man must commit himself to a role in the world, that is to say he must become *engagé*, an idea Sartre would frequently articulate in later texts. *Engagement* is synonymous with action, whether for prisoners or writers: “L’écrivain « engagé » sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c’est changer et qu’on ne peut dévoiler qu’en projetant de changer.”<sup>577</sup> This idea guided Sartre as a writer and shows up repeatedly in *Bariona*. Although the term *engagement* is not used explicitly in the play, the dénouement is precisely the moment when Bariona realizes that he must make a

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid., VI, 6.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., VI, 7.

<sup>576</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mouches* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), Acte II, IIe tableau, scène v.

<sup>577</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 28.

choice and actively support what he believes. Sartre also believed that any such attempt to become engaged would be futile without the solidarity of others. Bariona clearly goes through all the stages required of a man becoming a moral being: at first, his resistance to authority is to demand the extinction of his village; later, he realizes that his solitary lifestyle is meaningless and reconnects with his village in order to change mankind's destiny.

In addition to many of the typical Sartrean themes mentioned earlier, the play also contains the common enemy, "le salaud." Regardless of the importance attributed to religious themes, the enemy remains anyone who would oppress free people, whether the oppressors were ancient Romans or modern day Nazis. Sartrean villains regard others as weak beings devoid of the capacity for self-determination, something that would have resonated with the men in the camp. The term "le salaud" is "characteristic of a special class of persons whose relation to others is one of oppression, whose being is parasitic on that of their victims,"<sup>578</sup> and first appears in *La Nausée* (1938): "Il n'y a que les Salauds qui croient gagner."<sup>579</sup> Although the "salauds" may believe that they are winning, *Bariona* provides hope to the downtrodden that they can, and indeed must, fight anyone who tries to tyrannize liberty.

*Bariona* represents a shift from the nationalist projects produced by writers previously studied in this work, including Victor Hugo and Marc Bloch, to the more universalist existentialism displayed in Sartre's work. Judea becomes more than just a simple allegory for contemporary France. The choice of a biblical theme was, of course, partially chosen to deceive German censorship, but the comprehensive message to the play was intended for humanity at large. Tyrannical occupation was taking place throughout Europe, and Sartre was appealing to mankind's innate ability to fight for its freedom.

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<sup>578</sup> Peter Caws, *Sartre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 78.

<sup>579</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), 221.

#### 4.2.6 *Bariona* and Later Criticism

Critics have largely ignored the existence of *Bariona*, due in part to Sartre's own insistence that the play not be restaged. Many Sartrean scholars believe *Les Mouches* to be his first play and simply begin their analyses of his theatrical work in 1943.<sup>580</sup> Those who do acknowledge *Bariona* focus almost exclusively on its religious theme, whether to dismiss it as a wartime aberration or to point out that even an atheist existentialist as famous as Sartre saw benefits in Christianity. Religious critics see Bariona as a man who first subscribes to the Religion of Nothingness (*Religion du Néant*) associated with many existentialist characters, but who becomes a believer when it matters most. However, as Abbé Perrin notes:

l'événement de Noël est certes bien intégré, mais tout autre « mythe » aurait pu jouer un rôle analogue de révélateur. [...] Les grandes lignes de *Bariona*, j'aurais pu les prévoir, sachant le « sujet »: refus de la tyrannie, découverte fulgurante de la liberté, puis la question: qu'en faire, de cette liberté?<sup>581</sup>

It was understood from the beginning that Sartre may have chosen a Nativity setting, but the theme of the play was independent of any religious connotations. The focus was always on man's role in determining his own destiny.

Other critics, like Sartre himself, frequently dismiss *Bariona* as a mediocre play, meant only for a specific group of prisoners: "Sans doute la pièce n'était-elle ni bonne ni bien jouée; c'était un travail d'amateurs, diraient les critiques, le produit de circonstances particulières."<sup>582</sup> Some Sartrean critics like Robert Champigny doubt that the prisoners were even able to draw any meaningful message from the play:

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<sup>580</sup> Christine Mohanty, "Bariona, The Germination of Sartrean Theater," *The French Review* 47, no. 6 (May, 1974), 1094.

<sup>581</sup> Perrin, 98.

<sup>582</sup> *Un théâtre de situations*, 62.

Beyond the vague virtue of a comforting drug, what significance would they draw from the play? Let us suppose that they equated the Romans in the play with the Germans in their case. Bariona's situation remains quite different from theirs. [...] I suppose Sartre's intention was not to encourage his fellow-prisoners to start a rebellion against the German guards. Sensibly, they stayed put; some of them attempted to escape individually.<sup>583</sup>

By writing off *Bariona* as the story of events far removed from the prisoners' reality, Champigny is able to negate Sartre's intended message of hope. Sartre himself was quite clear that inspiring hope was his primary objective. The early play displayed many typical Sartrean messages, including the need to defy authority, something that would have greatly appealed to the camp inmates.

The other major obstacle to widespread knowledge about the play was Sartre's reluctance to see the play performed after he left the camp. While writing the work, he was excited about his efforts, writing to Beauvoir: "j'ai certainement du talent comme auteur dramatique, j'ai fait une scène d'ange annonçant aux bergers la naissance du Christ qui leur a coupé le souffle à tous."<sup>584</sup> After returning home, he felt the play was not good enough to be shown in public and that it should be left alone as a work created for and by prisoners: "Ce drame, qui n'était biblique qu'en apparence, était écrit et monté par un prisonnier, joué par des prisonniers dans des décors peints par des prisonniers ; il était destiné exclusivement à des prisonniers (à tel point que je n'ai jamais permis depuis qu'il soit joué ou même imprimé)."<sup>585</sup> This statement, written in 1946, clearly shows Sartre's later intention to relegate *Bariona* to a wartime play, not to be seen outside the circumstances of its creation.

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<sup>583</sup> Robert Champigny, *Sartre and Drama* (Birmingham, Alabama: French Literature Publications Company, 1982), 38.

<sup>584</sup> Sartre letter to Beauvoir, December 1940. Cited in, *Lettres au Castor et à quelques autres*, 300.

<sup>585</sup> *Un théâtre de situations*, 61-62.

Sartre did realize that most people would be unable to look past the religious aspects of the play. In 1962, the author directly addressed the question of *Bariona*'s religious themes:

Si j'ai pris mon sujet dans la mythologie du Christianisme, cela ne signifie pas que la direction de ma pensée ait changé, fût-ce un moment, pendant la captivité. Il s'agissait simplement, d'accord avec les prêtres prisonniers, de trouver un sujet qui pût réaliser, ce soir de Noël, l'union la plus large des chrétiens et des incroyants.<sup>586</sup>

Sartre chose the Nativity as a theme that would appeal to as many prisoners as possible, with the term "mythology" implying that he could easily have chosen any other common story as his basis. For him, the play had only ever been about giving hope during a very difficult time for his fellow soldiers and his country.

After his release from the prison camp, Sartre and Beauvoir, along with several other well-known writers, established "Socialisme et Liberté," a clandestine group of intellectuals dedicated to fighting Vichy and German collaborators. Because they lacked the experience to attack anyone in a physical sense, they did their fighting through pamphlets and short articles.<sup>587</sup> The group quickly dissolved and Sartre chose to write against German occupation rather than resist in a more physically active way. According to Beauvoir, the decision to take a less active role was apparently quite difficult for him: "ce projet, longtemps caressé au stalag, et pour lequel pendant des semaines il s'était joyeusement dépensé, il coûtait à Sartre d'y renoncer."<sup>588</sup> Although Sartre gave up the idea of physically fighting, he continued to produce works aimed at combating and preventing future Nazi domination. While writing *Bariona*, he realized the power possible in theatre: "comme je m'adressais à mes camarades par-dessus les feux de la rampe, leur parlant de leur condition de prisonniers, quand je les vis soudain si remarquablement

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<sup>586</sup> Preface to *Bariona* (Paris: Editions Marescot, 1967).

<sup>587</sup> John Gerassi, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Hated Conscience of His Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 175-176.

<sup>588</sup> Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge*, 514.

silencieux et attentifs, je compris ce que le théâtre devrait être : un grand phénomène collectif de circonstances.”<sup>589</sup> After his release, he published his major philosophical opus, *L'Être et le Néant* (1943), and one of his most famous plays, *Les Mouches* (1943), neither of which suffered greatly from German censorship. *L'Être et le Néant* was begun before the war, and Sartre worked on it during his time in the military.<sup>590</sup> In his subsequent works, there is an ever-present message that proclaims man's duty to free himself and others, just as Bariona eventually understood.

In a terrible twist of irony, upon his return to Paris, Sartre was given a position at the Lycée Condorcet, replacing Henri Dreyfus-Le Foyer, a nephew of Alfred Dreyfus and a Jew forced to resign his teaching post under Vichy laws.<sup>591</sup> He had been freed from a prisoner-of-war camp, only to return to work in a country which had become one of the least free places for its Jewish citizens. This situation was a devastating contradiction for French intellectuals, but Sartre remained significantly quiet on the issue.

Jean-Paul Sartre would eventually emerge as one of the twentieth century's most influential intellectuals, using his skills in a variety of related activities: existentialist philosopher, novelist, playwright, literary critic, and political activist. Although *Bariona* remained virtually unstudied until after Sartre's death in 1980, the play continues to intrigue those scholars who look beyond its obvious religious setting. *Bariona* can easily be seen as one of the major turning points in Sartre's life, marking the period when he began to focus on hope and man's potential to impact the world around him through the exercise of his free will.

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<sup>589</sup> *Un théâtre de situations*, 62.

<sup>590</sup> Sartre letter to Beauvoir, 23 July 1940. Cited in *Lettres au Castor*, 286.f

<sup>591</sup> Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life under the Occupation* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007), 138.

### 4.3 MARC BLOCH

Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch started life with the weight of French history bearing down on him. He used his family history as a response to those who might say he had no right to speak for Frenchmen, proudly stating that:

mon arrière-grand-père fut soldat, en 93; que mon père, en 1870, servit dans Strasbourg assiégé; que mes deux oncles et lui quittèrent volontairement leur Alsace natale, après son annexion au Ile Reich; que j'ai été élevé dans le culte de ces traditions patriotiques, dont les Israélites de l'exode alsacien furent toujours les plus fervents mainteneurs; que la France, enfin, dont certains conspireraient volontiers à m'expulser aujourd'hui et peut-être (qui sait?) y réussiraient, demeurera, quoi qu'il arrive, la patrie dont je ne saurais déraciner mon cœur.<sup>592</sup>

With this testimonial, Bloch establishes his authority, just as Victor Hugo had done sixty years earlier.<sup>593</sup> An Alsatian Jew whose family had a long history of loyal service to France, Bloch claims that he could speak of French history because he and his family had been an integral part of it.

Born in Lyon on 6 July 1886, Bloch and his family moved to Paris before his second birthday. The family was republican, liberal, and intensely patriotic, claiming “the capital as their home, the Revolution as their liberator, and the Third Republic as their benefactor.”<sup>594</sup> Jewish devotion to the French Revolution and republics was a well-documented phenomenon. French republics had always ‘legitimized’ Jews by giving them increased rights, beginning with the 1791 decision to admit Jews as equal citizens. By the late nineteenth century, many Jewish

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<sup>592</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 31-32.

<sup>593</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 150.

<sup>594</sup> Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14.



families manifested their love for *la patrie* by downplaying or even negating their religious ties in favor of a new form of nation-based religion.<sup>595</sup>

A beneficiary of the Third Republic's devotion to national education, Bloch was schooled in a system that saw public education as "a thaumaturgic answer to France's political and social ills after Sedan."<sup>596</sup> Raised on textbooks that promoted national pride, like G. Bruno's *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants* (1877) and national educational policies established by Ernest Lavissee and Jules Ferry, Bloch received a traditional French republican education of the time.

The Dreyfus Affair (1894) had a strong impact on Marc Bloch's childhood, showing him that the anti-Semitism most French Republican Jews preferred to regard as something from the past was indeed alive and thriving in France. He became highly skeptical of French military leadership, producing a negative image of "its snobbery, anti-Semitism, and anti-republicanism, its narrow educational system and jealous protection of its autonomy vis-à-vis the political and judicial sectors of the state."<sup>597</sup> Bloch's own early experiences in the military during World War I would only confirm his early opinions: "like everyone else, I was impressed by the total inadequacy of our material preparation as well as of our military training."<sup>598</sup> He goes on to say that he was aware of "shocking negligence" and found officers to be "insufficiently concerned with their men's well-being, too ignorant of their physical condition, and too uninterested to find out. The words 'Let them cope' – that sinister phrase which, after 1870, no one should have dared to utter again – were still too often on their lips."<sup>599</sup> The lack of regard for the soldiers during this long and bloody war seemed to Bloch a heartless repeat of the bungled and ill-fated

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<sup>595</sup> For multiple examples of this phenomenon, see Pierre Birnbaum, *The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>596</sup> Singer, 414.

<sup>597</sup> Fink, 22.

<sup>598</sup> Marc Bloch, *Memoirs of War, 1914-15*, Carole Fink, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 159.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid., 161.

Franco-Prussian War, showing him that the military had learned nothing from its previous defeat.

A graduate of the prestigious Lycée Louis-le-Grand, Bloch went on to receive his *agrégation* from the École Normale Supérieure in 1909. After leaving the ENS, he studied in Berlin and Leipzig, a common plan for young French intellectuals.<sup>600</sup> When World War I broke out, Bloch, like most men of his generation, found himself in the military. Prepared for active service, his unit instead suffered from problems that would plague the Army throughout the next World War: “poor leadership, inadequate equipment, chaotic arrangements, and oscillation between extremes of inactivity and frenetic activity.”<sup>601</sup> Ten of Bloch’s forty-one *normalien* classmates were killed during World War I.<sup>602</sup>

Wounded several times during the fighting, Bloch almost died of typhoid fever in early 1915.<sup>603</sup> Upon his recovery, he wrote *Souvenirs de guerre* (1969, posthumous), a work critical of French military leadership, but full of praise for his fellow soldiers. The work was not published until well after Bloch’s death, but serves as the testimonial for his first wartime experiences. Returning to the front, Bloch signed up as a volunteer in another regiment, with whom he received his first of four decorations for “energetic leadership and defiance of danger”<sup>604</sup> during French counterattacks against Prussian forces. Returning to his original regiment, Bloch ended the war in the Alsatian region of his ancestors.<sup>605</sup>

In 1919, Bloch married Simone Vidal, daughter of a prominent wealthy Jewish family distantly related to the Dreyfus family. The couple had six children, the eldest of whom went on

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<sup>600</sup> Fink, 40.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid., 64-65.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 78.

to publish his father's unfinished works and make the majority of his correspondence available to scholars. Like many of his colleagues, Bloch devoted the interwar years to his family and his research. In her introduction to Bloch's *Memoirs of War, 1914-1915*, Carole Fink observes that: "the former *poilus* and their noncommissioned officers turned civic, moral, and military leadership over to older and more reactionary individuals and institutions in exchange for *la bonne vie*."<sup>606</sup> Bloch himself described his generation as "une génération qui a mauvaise conscience,"<sup>607</sup> referring to its willingness to allow the previous generation to take control once again. One of the ways in which Bloch attempted to rectify part of his generation's mistakes was to write testimonials for future reference, relating his observations and memories of wartime France. For him, this project was entirely separate from the historical writing he did as part of his job.

After his service in World War I, Bloch began teaching at the University of Strasbourg. In order to secure a permanent position, he quickly finished his doctoral thesis in late 1920 on the groundbreaking medieval study entitled "Rois et serfs, un chapitre d'histoire capétienne."<sup>608</sup> Bloch's scholarly works frequently used a *longue durée* approach, focusing on the long-term effects of human decisions. For instance, he believed that agrarian structures of the Middle Ages were slow to change, not because of geographical distance, but rather because of decisions made and upheld by the societies in power, forming traditions that were resistant to change. This social memory approach informs the work that constitutes the focus of my study, *L'Étrange défaite*, which examines how France set itself up for defeat in 1940.

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<sup>606</sup> *Memoirs of War*, 57.

<sup>607</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 202.

<sup>608</sup> Fink, 91.

One of Bloch's most important academic contributions came about in the interwar period. With his colleague and good friend, Lucien Febvre, Bloch established the *Annales d'Histoire Économique et Sociale* in 1929. The *Annales* originally began as an international project, but due to national posturing on the part of their foreign colleagues, Bloch and Febvre chose to make it a "national review with an international spirit."<sup>609</sup> The journal broke with traditional historiography by rejecting the overwhelming emphasis on political history, insisting on the importance of all levels of society and rejecting the Paris-centric approach that had dominated French history. Unlike other intellectual journals of the time, the *Annales* dealt with both historical and contemporary questions, frequently featuring topical questions in its issues.

Maintaining the *Annales* and his own teaching responsibilities kept Bloch busy throughout the decade leading to World War II. Although his age and six children would have exempted him from military service in 1940, he chose to stay on the Army's active list.<sup>610</sup> Filled with the desire to help his country, Bloch instead found himself enraged to "me sentir si mal employé."<sup>611</sup> He shared details about his daily routine with his family, while expressing a sense of anticipation that the soldiers felt:

Je n'ai pas grand'chose à faire, la plus grande partie de mon activité consistant à écouter les grognements des gens dont il a fallu réduire la consommation d'essence. Je me lève assez tard ; je lis ; je joue quelquefois aux échecs. Et, comme tout le monde, j'attends les événements.<sup>612</sup>

The lack of activity came to wear down the morale of the soldiers, and was, according to Bloch, symptomatic of the lack of preparation for the War.

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<sup>609</sup> Susan W. Friedman, *March Bloch, Sociology and Geography: Encountering Changing Disciplines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101.

<sup>610</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 33.

<sup>611</sup> Marc Bloch letter to Étienne Bloch, 5 September 1940. Cited in François Bédarida and Denis Peschanski, eds. *Marc Bloch à Étienne Bloch: Lettres de la "Drôle de guerre"* (Paris: Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent, 1991), 43.

<sup>612</sup> Bloch letter to Alice Bloch, 31 March 1940. Cited in *Lettres de la "Drôle de guerre,"* 82.

Fervently patriotic, Bloch summed up his feelings about France in *L'Étrange défaite*: “J’y suis né, j’ai bu aux sources de sa culture, j’ai fait mien son passé, je ne respire bien que sous son ciel, et je me suis efforcé, à mon tour, de la défendre de mon mieux.”<sup>613</sup> He felt that it was his duty to serve in the military, and following the “Phoney War” to become active in the Resistance, in order best to defend his homeland.

Bloch narrowly escaped Vichy laws preventing Jews from teaching in 1940. Seeing the increased discrimination against French Jews, he requested a temporary post in America, with visas for his wife, children, and mother.<sup>614</sup> Due to bureaucratic delays, Bloch was unable to get his family to the States, even though the Rockefeller Foundation found him a post as Associate Professor of Medieval History.<sup>615</sup> In the meantime, Bloch applied for exemption from the Vichy Statut des Juifs laws that forbade Jewish families from holding many jobs, including military and teaching posts. He was granted exemption after a long campaign by friends and colleagues, allowing him to remain at the University of Strasbourg, until his wife’s declining health forced the family to move to Montpellier.

While in the south of France, Bloch made his first connections with the Resistance movement. A university professor until the German invasion of the unoccupied zone in November 1942, Bloch was forced by increasingly stringent anti-Semitic policies to flee to his country home in Fougères, Bretagne.<sup>616</sup> Many of the possessions he left behind, including much of his research, were declared forfeit, since Bloch had officially abandoned his post. Shortly

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<sup>613</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 32-33.

<sup>614</sup> Fink, 243.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-249.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 291-292.

after his arrival in Fougères, he left once again for the south to join the Franc-Tireur<sup>617</sup> group of *résistants*. In Lyon, Bloch's birthplace, the fifty-six year old began his resistance career ferrying messages and newspapers between cells. After a few months, he was entrusted with organizing the group, and began to prepare a "Liberation Committee" to govern the region after the Allies' debarkation.<sup>618</sup> Over the course of the next year, Bloch became one of the most senior Resistance leaders in the area, with many contacts throughout the network.

In a series of Gestapo crackdowns, Bloch and many of his Resistance colleagues were arrested in early March, 1944. Bloch was taken to Gestapo headquarters, directed by Klaus Barbie and notorious for its range of torture methods. Bloch was repeatedly tortured and interrogated by the Germans, who had fixed on him as a person meriting special attention.<sup>619</sup> On 16 June, just two months before the liberation of Paris, Bloch and twenty-seven other prisoners were taken to a meadow outside of Lyon, where they were shot, their bodies stripped of identification and left for locals to find the next day.<sup>620</sup>

After the devastating news of his death reached them, Marc Bloch's colleagues made it a priority to publish his remaining works. Two of his major works, *L'Étrange défaite* and *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (1949), were unpublished at the time of his death. Both of these books have since come to be regarded as classics, although the majority of his work is considered by the wider public to be limited to the medieval field.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Interestingly, the Franc-Tireur group was founded in 1941 to combat Vichy propaganda. The name comes from the 1870-1871 volunteers who had gained a reputation for fierce guerilla-style fighting. See Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870-1871* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 199-201.

<sup>618</sup> Fink, 306.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 320-322.

<sup>621</sup> Bryce Lyon, "Marc Bloch: Historian," *French Historical Studies* 15, no. 2 (Autumn, 1987), 196. See also Olivier Dumoulin, *Marc Bloch* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2000), 129-183.

Bloch wrote *L'Étrange défaite* based on notes describing his experiences throughout the Phoney War. For him, there was an immediate connection between military leadership and the impact its decisions had on both the soldiers under their command and society at large. One critic highlights the importance Bloch assigned to individuals when trying to understand how events had happened: “Always the realist, Bloch could not divorce the history he wrote from the way he observed individuals living their lives.”<sup>622</sup> Throughout his career, Bloch had always focused on factors that influenced history, believing that people and their decisions were the determining factors in historical events.

Bloch wrote his wartime testimonial in large part to denounce France’s lost chance to prepare for the upcoming war. The invasion of Poland eight months earlier should have given France some advance warning, but the country refused to respond in any meaningful way. He explicitly points to German behavior in the East as what should have been a harbinger of the coming storm:

nous avons sous les yeux, depuis l’été, l’exemple de la campagne de Pologne, dont les leçons étaient assez claires et que les Allemands, pour l’essentiel, devaient, dans l’Ouest, se borner à recommencer. Ils nous firent le cadeau de huit mois d’attente, qui auraient pu être aussi de réflexion et de réforme.<sup>623</sup>

For Bloch, the fact that this “gift” of eight months’ warning remained unopened was unforgivable, since it should have given the country the time needed for to prepare itself. He had already noted that unhurried planning could have prevented many of the initial mistakes, but the officer corps preferred the role of martyr to that of savior.<sup>624</sup>

By 1940, German aggression in the East was already a dominant theme in French literature, as witnessed by both texts chosen for this study. For Bloch, it was a harbinger of what

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>623</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 153-154.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 145.

France could expect from a German military push, while for Sartre, it was evidence of the cruelty to be found in Nazi policy toward ‘undesirable’ subjects. Both authors felt that France should have seen Poland and Czechoslovakia as examples of what awaited their own country, thus spurring them into greater action. Instead, both men find Frenchmen to be unwilling to accept that the same thing could happen to them.

Of course, Bloch was not the only person to write a first-hand, immediate testimonial account of his observations about France’s defeat in 1940. Albert Kammerer, a diplomat before the War, wrote *Le Crime de l’Armistice* (1940) and *Vérité sur l’Armistice* (1944), which criticized the government’s decision to surrender in 1940. In his *La Guerre n’a pas eu lieu* (1941), journalist Max Beer suggests that France was not ready for war, due in large part to a false sense of security fueled by belief in the Maginot Line. Finally, writer Jacques de Launay’s *Le Monde en Guerre* (1945) echoes many of Bloch’s suppositions: namely, that the French military suffered from defeated spirits and outdated ideas.

#### **4.3.1 Criticism of Marc Bloch**

Known primarily as a medieval historian, Marc Bloch has not been the object of much critical attention. Indeed, to date, only three biographies have been written about Bloch,<sup>625</sup> although he is mentioned throughout historiographical texts, as well as being cited as a mentor to such famous historians as Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff. In the last twenty years, there has been a renewal of interest in Bloch’s Resistance work and writing. To a large degree, this is due to increased study devoted to France’s repressed past. Among the reasons for this renewed interest

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<sup>625</sup> In addition to the two biographies used in this study, there is also a German text: Ulrich Raulff, *Ein Historiker im 20. Jahrhundert: Marc Bloch* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1995).



in the Second World War are trials of extradited Nazi officials, Holocaust revisionism, revelations about previously revered figures being involved in Fascism, and the desire to understand the purge of French collaborators.<sup>626</sup> Henry Rousso sees this movement as an attempt to reconstruct the nation: “En éliminant les traîtres à la patrie, à la nation *et* à la République, la France pouvait espérer fonder son destin futur sur une identité retrouvée.”<sup>627</sup> This “re-found identity” became necessary to a modern France struggling to come to terms with its recent past.

Scholars who have examined *L'Étrange défaite* have primarily limited themselves to reading the text at a superficial level for its value as a historical document. It is surprising that very little work has been done on addressing the difference between the historical observation and testimonial writing seen in Bloch. This discussion has taken place in the field of Holocaust testimonials, but the theory has typically not been applied to Bloch. While most theories of trauma writing and witnessing address the impossibility of speaking, Bloch is vehement in his need to speak about past mistakes. Because the Phoney War differs so greatly from the Holocaust, it is easy to see why Bloch did not suffer from an inability to communicate his experiences. His testimonial work does, however, fall into the category of needing an audience. As Dori Laub notes: “The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time.”<sup>628</sup> While Bloch

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<sup>626</sup> See Philip Watts, *Allegories of the Purge: How Literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>627</sup> Henry Rousso, “L'Épuration en France. Une histoire inachevée,” *Vingtième Siècle* 33 (Jan. – Mar., 1992), 105.

<sup>628</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

casts doubt that his work will be seen by the public (“Ces pages seront-elles jamais publiées?”<sup>629</sup>), he is nonetheless writing for a future audience.

Bloch’s first-hand observations and meticulous scientific methodology leave little room for debating his facts, although issues could be taken with the heavy bias shown. Additionally, as a member of the Resistance who was tortured and killed by the Gestapo, Bloch’s posthumous work has achieved an almost sacred status. Olivier Dumoulin is one of the few Bloch scholars to address the “beatification” of his works, following his death as a *Résistant*, noting that: “on baptise du nom de Marc Bloch, on se drape dans son souvenir, on se justifie par la seule vertu de son évocation, on s’achète une conscience grâce à lui.”<sup>630</sup> Not only was Bloch a national hero, but France was able to “repurchase” some of its dignity by covering itself in his mantle. It is extremely unlikely that any attempt to question Bloch or his last written work would have been welcomed with any degree of success. Nonetheless, a critical reading of his testimonial narrative is necessary to understand the depth of his work.

Shortly after the War, historian Saul K. Padover, Professor at the New School for Social Research in New York City, posited that there were five reasons to explain why French scholarship has failed to investigate thoroughly the tragedy of 1940. A contemporary of Bloch, he felt that *L’Étrange défaite* should have received more critical attention than it did. Academic traditionalism is the first problem cited in his thesis. Padover asserts that “contemporary history is not a favored theme among established academicians.”<sup>631</sup> Scholars who devoted themselves to studying recent events ran the risk of being dismissed as journalists, not true researchers. Of course, Padover might well have missed Bloch’s intention, when he claims that contemporary

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<sup>629</sup> *L’Étrange défaite*, 29.

<sup>630</sup> Dumoulin, 29.

<sup>631</sup> Saul K. Padover, “France in Defeat: Causes and Consequences,” *World Politics* 2, no. 3 (April, 1950), 305.

studies were written off as “journalism.” An established historian, Bloch had written testimonial accounts during both World Wars in which he served, and both works gained great critical acclaim.

Padover additionally believed that a problem especially present in France in the immediate post-war years was the lack of funds available for this sort of study. Tied to the problem of trying to study works like *L'Étrange défaite* in the 1940s and 1950s was the issue of subjectivity. The experiences of the War were still painfully present in most people's minds, making the subjective distance necessary for impartial research nearly impossible. Tied to this last reason was what Padover calls the “absence of the spirit of sociological inquiry,” by which he means that post-war France suffered from a tendency to dismiss quantitative social science techniques in favor of “individualist-intellectual”<sup>632</sup> inquiries. The last, and perhaps most powerful, explanation of why wartime works were not being adequately discussed is the fear of consequences felt by many scholars:

A scholarly and comprehensive study of the *Strange Defeat* would, almost certainly, stir up political passions and result in further disunity. Nor must one forget that the incompetents, semitraitors, and collaborationists of 1940 are either back in influential positions or have influential friends.<sup>633</sup>

This argument undoubtedly reflects the complicated situation of intellectuals in immediate post-war France, but it is also reminiscent of Bloch's own criticism of the current War vis-à-vis World War I. It is difficult to recreate national unity when incompetent, and potentially traitorous, men are once again in charge of making the country's decisions.

Perhaps the most valid criticism that can be attached to *L'Étrange défaite* is that Marc Bloch was too attached to his subject. The distance most historians pride themselves on

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

maintaining with their subject is completely lost in his treatment of France's defeat in 1940. Written in the first person, the text is clearly a personal account of one man's experiences during the *drôle de guerre* and France's subsequent defeat. Although dates and facts are given to support Bloch's stories, it remained his choice of which incidents to report and what conclusions he drew from them. Several anecdotes recounted in the book are intended to reveal military incompetence, but in reality come across as individual incidents showing a single man's mistakes, rather than a widespread systemic problem. While maintaining historical distance under the Occupation was no doubt impossible, Bloch's overtly patriotic text must be read with the circumstances of its creation in mind.

Of course, Bloch was well aware of his lack of distance, but felt that his observations were no less valid for his emotional attachment to the subject: "Je vais toucher, ici, à un sujet délicat et sur lequel, on le sait, je n'ai le droit que d'avoir des impressions un peu lointaines. Mais il importe que certaines choses soient dites, brutalement, s'il le faut."<sup>634</sup> Since none of France's politicians or leading intellectuals seemed capable of assessing and correcting the country's problems, Bloch felt it was his responsibility, as a historian, soldier, and loyal Frenchman to bring the problems to light.

At the time of the work's initial publication, France was still reeling from years of occupation and defeat. *L'Étrange défaite* painfully spelled out the reasons for France's most recent failure and served as a memorial to Bloch, both as a historian and as a member of the Resistance. Bloch biographer Carole Fink points out the difficulty of releasing this particular text at a time when the wounds were still fresh: "at that moment it was an act of homage to release a text that was painful and difficult for most Frenchmen who had newly recovered their

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<sup>634</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 78.

freedom to absorb.”<sup>635</sup> The text however quickly went on to become one of the most popular and accessible eye-witness accounts of the War, and is still widely used in historical circles today.

*L'Étrange défaite* brings up the question of what happens when you remember war. This sort of memorializing is particularly contentious when the country is in danger, whether from the same contemporary source or from a separate problem. Within the context of this study, we have seen the different possibilities for addressing national crises. Although they use diverse techniques, Sade, Bruno, and Bloch wrote about events taking place around them, while Hugo, Verne, and Sartre present historical allegories to discuss current events. In any case, the author must choose between presenting systemic or anecdotal evidence, in order to create some sort of diagnosis of the problem. Much like Sade, Bloch spoke directly to his reader, trying to convince his audience through the use of powerful evidentiary testimony that action must be taken to prevent the same fate befalling future generations.

#### **4.3.2 *L'Étrange défaite* as Wartime Testimonial**

A well-established historian, Marc Bloch analyzed the problems of contemporary France with scientific research methodology. *L'Étrange défaite* was written from July to September, 1940, using his personal wartime notes, while Bloch was awaiting his official demobilization from military service. The work is written in a style reminiscent of Zola's famous “J'accuse” letter (1898), dissecting military and social failings that led to France's rapid defeat. Like the

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<sup>635</sup> Fink, 326.

nineteenth-century document, *L'Étrange défaite* accuses multiple agencies, the press, and military leadership for the current problems.

The book criticizes France's leadership for its unwillingness to recognize the changes in modern warfare and its failure to prepare the next generation for international challenges. The first chapter is a brief personal history, detailing Bloch's devotion to historical scholarship and presenting the author as an expert witness. The second chapter is an account of the country at war, based on Bloch's own experiences and observations. The book concludes with a guilty verdict for the nation as a whole. The last chapter is a harsh analysis of the interwar generation and how their actions and decisions led to the current quagmire. Ever the historian, Bloch was scientific and meticulous in his approach, but he was not sure that the work would ever be seen by his fellow countrymen: "Ces pages seront-elles jamais publiées? Je ne sais. Il est probable, en tout cas, que, de longtemps, elles ne pourront être connues, sinon sous le manteau, en dehors de mon entourage immédiat."<sup>636</sup> Bloch put both the content and the destiny of his work and his political beliefs in the *longue durée*, intending his testimonial to stay in his private files until France was once again free and could calmly examine the causes for its collapse.<sup>637</sup>

From the beginning of the work, Bloch seeks to lay everything open. He identifies himself as a Jew in the first few pages of the book, but refutes possible future allegations that his religion has any role to play in his historical criticism:

Je suis Juif, sinon par la religion, que je ne pratique point, non plus que nulle autre, du moins par la naissance. Je n'en tire ni orgueil ni honte, étant, je l'espère, assez bon historien pour n'ignorer point que les prédispositions raciales sont un mythe et la notion même de race pure une absurdité particulièrement flagrante [...].<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 29.

<sup>637</sup> Fink, 237.

<sup>638</sup> *L'Étrange défaite*, 31.

Like most ‘republicanized’ Jews of his generation, he had never been a truly practicing adherent, but he never denied his Jewish background. Having grown up in an era rife with anti-Semitic prejudices, Bloch knew that some readers would automatically discount his criticisms of French government responsibility for the debacle.

*L’Étrange défaite* is structured to resemble a courtroom trial, with three sections entitled “Présentation du témoin,” “La déposition d’un vaincu,” and “Examen de conscience d’un Français.” The legal terminology used in the chapter titles demonstrates Bloch’s determination to put the French establishment on trial. The device of an imaginary trial was not, of course, invented by Bloch. This style goes back to the Middle Ages, including Alain Chartier’s *Le Quadrilogue invectif* (1422), whose imagery was mentioned earlier in this chapter. It was also used by collaborationists, such as Marcel Jouhandeau in his *Journal sous l’Occupation*, to plead for clemency and to justify their actions. Shoshana Felman posits that a special relationship exists between trials and traumas. For her, a trial is a form of closure, while literature serves as an aperture, creating tension in testimonials: “Literature [...] encapsulates not closure but precisely what in a given legal case refuses to be closed and cannot be closed. It is to this refusal of the trauma to be closed that literature does justice.”<sup>639</sup> In Bloch’s case, he takes the literary witness stand to speak about crimes committed against his country and put its leaders on trial, highlighting the tensions that existed in recently defeated France and substituting a faux trial for a real one that would probably never take place.

The book begins with background information on Bloch, establishing his credentials as a Frenchman who had loyally served his country, as had his ancestors before him. As noted earlier, he doubted that his remarks would ever be known beyond his immediate group of

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<sup>639</sup> Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 8.

cohorts. Bloch does take pains to point out that he is recording more than his personal observations, stating that: “je n’écris pas ici mes souvenirs.”<sup>640</sup> Rather, his intent is to set forth logical interpretations and criticisms of events he has just witnessed first-hand, establishing himself as both an ordinary witness and an expert in French history. Because he did not have access to the documentation necessary to write “une histoire critique de la guerre,”<sup>641</sup> he had to limit himself to the facts and observations at his disposal. He described *L’Étrange défaite* as a “bilan,” or “balance sheet” of history:

Mes enfants, qui liront ce bilan, les amis inconnus, sous les yeux desquels il tombera peut-être un jour, comment accepter qu’ils puissent lui reprocher d’avoir biaisé avec le vrai et, sévère pour certaines erreurs, d’avoir gardé complaisamment le silence sur trop d’autres fautes où tout citoyen eut sa part?<sup>642</sup>

Bloch had tried to present the facts as he saw them in as clearly and precisely as possible, so that his children and colleagues could benefit from it as much as possible for future conflicts.

Once he established his authority as a loyal Frenchman, Bloch moves into his direct testimony. The heart of the book is an examination of the causes of France’s sudden defeat. Included in this portion of the book are condemnations of a military lacking leadership and cohesion: “Nous venons de subir une incroyable défaite. À qui la faute? Au régime parlementaire, à la troupe, aux Anglais, à la cinquième colonne, répondent nos généraux. À tout le monde, en somme, sauf à eux.”<sup>643</sup> Leaving no doubt as to where he believes the majority of the blame falls, Bloch ends this first paragraph with the statement: “la cause [...] fut l’incapacité du commandement,”<sup>644</sup> clearly showing the disaster to be first and foremost a military failure.

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<sup>640</sup> *L’Étrange défaite*, 29.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.



However, Bloch does not limit himself to blaming only high-ranking military officials for the defeat. Included in his condemnation are opinion-shaping agencies like the press and national literature:

Notre presse, presque tout entière, et tout ce qu'il y a, dans notre littérature, de foncièrement académique, ont répandu dans notre opinion le culte du convenu. Un général est, par nature, un grand général; et lorsqu'il a mené son armée à la débâcle, il arrive qu'on le récompense par un cordon de la Légion d'honneur. Ainsi s'imaginent-on, sans doute, entretenir, par un voile pudiquement jeté sur les pires erreurs, la confiance de la nation; alors qu'en réalité on ne fait que semer, parmi les exécutants, un dangereux agacement.<sup>645</sup>

It is only with the support of the media that military hero-worship is allowed to continue, creating an ever-stronger culture of unaccountability. Bloch sees this sort of society being founded on a collective psychosis ("une sorte de psychose de l'affectivité collective"<sup>646</sup>) that glorifies past and present military leaders.

Bloch blames the country's problems on aged officers left over from the First World War, men who relived their former glory and disregarded new advancements in warfare. Toward the end of his testimonial section, he reflects on who made up the leadership during the Phoney War:

Qu'étaient nos chefs de 1940? Des généraux de corps d'armée ou d'armée, qui avaient fait la dernière guerre comme chefs de bataillon ou colonels. Leurs principaux adjoints? Des commandants de compagnie de 1918. Tous, à des degrés divers, ils restaient dominés par leurs souvenirs de la campagne de la veille. Qui s'en étonnera? Ces glorieuses expériences, ils ne les avaient pas seulement cent fois ressassées, par la parole ou l'écrit; ils n'en avaient pas seulement tiré une matière pédagogique. Elles adhéraient à leur conscience, avec toute la ténacité d'images de jeunesse.<sup>647</sup>

Most of France's military leaders had either been reactivated after the last war, or had never left their positions. To various degrees, they all relied heavily on past successes when making

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid., 154.

decisions for the current war. According to Bloch, they consciously clung to their past glory days, as a means to maintain their own youthfulness.

Having established that France is suffering from an over-glorification of its questionable military leadership, Bloch then moves on to examine closely the *esprit de corps* that, while necessary to a cohesive military, has been corrupted by snobbery and stagnation. He refers to an “irritante morgue d’École de Guerre,”<sup>648</sup> in which staff officers believe themselves to be superior to field officers. The former group, according to Bloch, suffers from a “pauvreté d’imagination et manque de sens concret,”<sup>649</sup> something the men in the field were forced to use in order to survive. The disconnect between the decision-making branch and the foot soldiers created a chasm that frequently resulted in foolish and oftentimes impossible orders.

The military education that French officers received was heavily blamed for their lack of initiative, as well as their unwillingness to adapt their methods to current issues. As an eye-witness to two wars, Bloch observed that this unenlightened educational system had persisted for many years:

les défaillances du caractère eurent, je crois, leur principale origine dans l’intelligence et sa formation.

Par deux fois, dans deux campagnes différentes, à plus de vingt ans d’intervalle, j’ai entendu des officiers brevetés dire de l’enseignement qu’ils avaient reçu: « L’École de Guerre nous a trompés. »<sup>650</sup>

According to Bloch, even senior-level officers were aware that their training had let them down, in terms of being able to adapt to modern German warfare. No one, however, was willing to take the steps necessary to update the École de Guerre.

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<sup>648</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., 145.

This resistance to change came from a self-perpetuating system that drew many of its officers from military instructors, and vice-versa. These men were set in their ways and intolerant of any criticism from their students, future commanders:

étant hommes de foi et de doctrine, ils inclinent, le plus souvent sans s'en douter, à favoriser, parmi leurs disciples, les dociles plutôt que les contredisants. Rares, du moins, sont ceux qui conservent jusqu'au bout un cerveau assez souple, et, vis-à-vis de leurs propres partis pris, un sens critique assez délié pour échapper à ces péchés de métier. Combien le danger n'est-il pas encore plus grand quand, les auditeurs étant aussi des subordonnés, la contradiction prend nécessairement allure d'indiscipline!<sup>651</sup>

As a fellow educator, Bloch that instructors should keep open and “supple” minds regarding their own subject matter, something he sees very little of in the École de Guerre system. Unfortunately, the firmly established leadership chose to focus almost exclusively on remembered victories at the expense of exploring past defeats that could furnish valuable lessons. Any questioning of their methods was immediately punished as an act of insubordination, teaching the next generation of military leaders not to question existing policy.

#### **4.3.3 Fear and Power in the Military Establishment**

As previously noted in this study, indoctrination and terror are frequently used together. The fear instilled in military students created a system in which terror became intrinsic to the lessons received. The indoctrination of young recruits created a milieu that forbade questioning of authorities, on pain of ‘excommunication’ from the military. Maintaining this rigid hierarchy made it possible to perpetuate the system for the majority of the Third Republic.

In fact, Bloch is careful to point out that truly successful military leaders infrequently gain any real political power. Conversely, it is the vanquished men whom the country seems to

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid., 147-148.

prefer. He provides examples from both World Wars: “Mac-Mahon, malgré Sedan, Hindenburg, après l’effondrement de 1918, ont présidé aux destinées des régimes issus de leurs défaites; et ce n’est pas le Pétain de Verdun, non plus que le Weygand de Rethondes, que la France a mis ou laissé mettre à sa tête.”<sup>652</sup> Of course, technically Verdun was not a defeat, but it was one of France’s bloodiest battles ever, and under Pétain’s leadership, almost a quarter of a million Frenchmen had been killed, the true result desired by the Germans.<sup>653</sup>

The successful students were those who accepted and supported the lessons taught to them: “les trop bons élèves, à vrai dire, restaient obstinément fidèles aux doctrines apprises. Ils tenaient malheureusement les postes les plus influents.”<sup>654</sup> Only by accepting what their masters taught could they hope someday to attain the same leadership roles. Unfortunately, even those men who managed to get through the system relatively unscathed also emerged as poorly educated leaders. Bloch describes active-duty officers in 1939 as: “parfaitement gentils et serviables; sachant très bien leur métier [...] en somme, par l’intelligence et la valeur morale, très sympathique. Et, quand ils parlent politique, littéralement stupides.”<sup>655</sup> Officers had been indoctrinated with complacency throughout their training: “on s’était habitué [...] à se persuader, inconsciemment, que tout se passerait comme il était écrit.”<sup>656</sup> They became dominated by the past to the point that they could no longer fully grasp the present. New German warfare was not something already “written” in their textbooks, thus making it extremely difficult for the French military to understand it with any level of success.

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>653</sup> Cobban, 112-113.

<sup>654</sup> *L’Étrange défaite*, 155.

<sup>655</sup> Bloch letter to Étienne Bloch, 22 October 1939. Cited in *Lettres de la “Drôle de guerre,”* 49.

<sup>656</sup> *L’Étrange défaite*, 149.

This generational divide is seen as a missed opportunity for revamping the French military. While most of Bloch's professional writing displays a scientific style typical for historical annals, he does occasionally use metaphors in his more personal writing to stress important points to his reader. For instance, he likens the Army to an aging man who could benefit greatly from a transfusion of younger blood. A "rajeunissement" would prevent further sclerosis from developing: "contre l'ankylose du caractère, il n'est pas de protection plus sûre qu'un cerveau encore souple, dans un corps encore irrigué par un sang généreux."<sup>657</sup> This "sang généreux" would come from an influx of younger officers, bringing with them new ideas to be grafted onto existing ones. Unfortunately, as Bloch notes, "l'élagage, nous le savons déjà, n'eut pas lieu."<sup>658</sup> Here, the image is arboreal, using the term "pruning" to communicate the feeling that dead or damaged parts must be cut away, allowing the young plant to flourish.

Bloch believes the failure of military leaders to respond to the current crisis to be perhaps the most lamentable cause of the war: "Nos chefs ou ceux qui agissaient en leur nom n'ont pas su penser cette guerre. En d'autres termes, le triomphe des Allemands fut, essentiellement, une victoire intellectuelle et c'est peut-être là ce qu'il y a eu en lui de plus grave."<sup>659</sup> France's defeat was almost a foregone conclusion, given that the nation suffered from an archaic military mentality. Germany, on the other hand, understood how to accomplish victory in 1940:

Les Allemands ont fait une guerre d'aujourd'hui, sous le signe de la vitesse. Nous n'avons pas seulement tenté de faire, pour notre part, même où nous voyions les Allemands mener la leur, nous n'avons pas su ou pas voulu en comprendre le rythme, accordé aux vibrations accélérées d'une ère nouvelle. Si bien, qu'au vrai, ce furent deux adversaires appartenant chacun à un âge différent de l'humanité qui se heurtèrent sur nos champs de bataille. Nous avons en somme renouvelé les combats, familiers à notre

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 66.

histoire coloniale, de la sagaie contre le fusil c'est nous, cette fois, qui jouions les primitifs.<sup>660</sup>

This harsh comparison of German and French warfare shows the countries to be unevenly matched nations who don't even belong to the same era. In a note added in 1942, Bloch notes that during the First World War, Maréchal Foch had scoffed at the future of aviation, while Maréchal Pétain had written a paper about "les dangers de la motorisation."<sup>661</sup> Unfortunately this sort of attitude continued through the next war. In the earlier quote, Bloch sets up Germany as the colonial power France had always claimed to be, while France continues to play the role of "primitive." Of course, with the luxury of hind-sight, we are aware that Germany's initial speed was insufficient to win the War, but at the time of the work's composition, France's failure to adapt would have certainly been cause for concern and recriminations.

When faced with superior German technologies and tactics, French leaders were either reluctant or unwilling to take part in this "new era." German superiority was so taken for granted that, according to Bloch, even the average person in the street was in awe of the invading troops. He recounts that the German Army seemed have many admirable qualities, even to the people they had invaded:

Parmi les personnes qui avaient vécu en 1914-1918, sous l'occupation allemande et l'ont, de nouveau, subie, au cours de ces dernières semaines, plusieurs, sans s'être concertées, m'ont fait part d'une observation, dont j'ai été vivement frappé: comparée à l'armée du régime impérial, celle du régime nazi leur a paru de mœurs « plus démocratiques ».<sup>662</sup>

Although France was suffering its second German occupation within a generation, Frenchmen still found the Nazi soldiers to be more modern and democratic than their own soldiers who were dominated by an antiquated hierarchy.

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 84 fn.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 124.

Juxtaposing an archaic France with a modern German, Bloch compares the current French régime to the less admirable factions of the French Revolution. At the end of the “testimonial” section, he calls the obsession with mindlessly following the elder generation’s decisions a “superstition de l’âge” and a “faux culte.”<sup>663</sup> As a disparaging comment on the choices made by these “cult” leaders, he relates that a less-than-stellar general had recently been promoted, saying that “le Comité de Salut Public eût fait de lui un général en chef.”<sup>664</sup> While Bloch does not share any anecdotes to prove the general is incompetent, his mention of the Committee of Public Safety immediately brings to mind images of a chaotic and abusive government that led to internal and external strife until it was removed from power.

The cast of characters in this non-fiction work are clearly defined in their roles. Most of the average soldiers are presented as hard-working, honest men who have left their families to defend *la patrie*. They try to follow increasingly nonsensical orders from their superiors, who refuse to listen to anyone not career military. The next group is made up of individually incompetent military leaders, namely generals, who insist the troops follow their own specific regulations, regardless of established protocols. Bloch devotes short anecdotal stories to both of these groups, but reserves large-scale judgment of them. Rather, it is the General Staff that is described at length and blamed for the vast majority of the problems. As already noted, these military decision-makers are seen as being disconnected from the reality of modern warfare and from the needs of the troops in the field. Primarily composed of older, conservative graduates of traditional military schools, they were unable to adapt to the latest German invasion: “en un mot, parce que nos chefs, au milieu de beaucoup de contradictions, ont prétendu, avant tout,

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<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 157-158.

renouveler, en 1940, la guerre de 1915-1918. Les Allemands faisaient celle de 1940.”<sup>665</sup> Unlike their forward-thinking German counterparts, French leaders chose to focus on the past as the key to their victory, a mistake that would come to haunt them.

#### 4.3.4 The Role of History in France’s *Étrange défaite*

This failure to understand the basic concept of history as something that must change and evolve with time led to the General Staff clinging to outdated ideas. Bloch goes to great lengths to explain a concept that seems so simple, yet apparently proved incomprehensible for France’s tradition-based military establishment:

l’histoire est, par essence, science du changement. Elle sait et elle enseigne que deux événements ne se reproduisent jamais tout à fait semblables, parce que jamais les conditions ne coïncident exactement. [...] Elle peut s’essayer à pénétrer l’avenir; elle n’est pas, je crois, incapable d’y parvenir. Mais ses leçons ne sont point que le passé recommence, que ce qui a été hier sera demain. Examinant comment hier a différé d’avant-hier et pourquoi, elle trouve, dans ce rapprochement, le moyen de prévoir en quel sens demain, à son tour, s’opposera à hier.<sup>666</sup>

Given the remarkable innovations in warfare and troop movement in the interwar period, it would be impossible to superimpose strategies from the beginning of the century onto mid-century battles. It is the unwillingness to stop and examine the differences between 1914 and 1940 that prevents the General Staff from using history’s lessons to their advantage.

As the above quote demonstrates, Marc Bloch believed that history could be used to help predict future events and reactions. Using Gilles Deleuze’s theory of difference and repetition, we can supply theoretical support for his beliefs. For Bloch, repetition in fact becomes the modality of difference between historical events. World War I’s battles cannot be used as a

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., 150-151.



template for the current military invasion, while the previous generation's Franco-Prussian War is not mentioned per se in *L'Étrange défaite*. In many ways, *L'Étrange défaite* is the summation of my study, in that it demonstrates not only how an author attempts to influence national consciousness, but also shows how each event is unique in history.

The military's unwillingness to give proper consideration to the evolution of history led its leaders to expect the same war, over and over again, according to Bloch. This desire to see history continuously repeat itself leads military decision-makers to depend almost exclusively on past victories to prepare future battles: "aux chefs de 1914, il a persuadé que la guerre de 1914 serait celle de Napoléon; aux chefs de 1939, que la guerre de 1939 serait celle de 1914."<sup>667</sup> This quote from *L'Étrange défaite* echoes a letter Bloch had written his son in late 1939 showing his frustration with the military indoctrination given to the next generation: "Il ne faut jamais comparer sans précautions la stratégie napoléonienne aux choses du présent: comme l'ont fait, d'ailleurs beaucoup d'historiens militaires et Foch tout le premier. Car les conditions ont changé et l'histoire est une science de changement."<sup>668</sup> Ferdinand Foch was widely considered to be one of the most brilliant military minds of his time, but Bloch clearly saw him as the product of a system in need of overhaul.

While Bloch acknowledges that the few short months of fighting in 1940 may not have been long enough to understand and correct mistaken perceptions about the enemy, he feels that, with correct education, the leaders could have adapted much better to the war: "c'était avant l'événement qu'il aurait fallu savoir analyser les nouvelles données du problème stratégique."<sup>669</sup> This sort of approach would have allowed for some analysis and prevision prior to engagements.

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<sup>667</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>668</sup> Bloch letter to Étienne Bloch, 27 October 1939. Cited in *Lettres de la "Drôle de guerre,"* 51.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid., 153.

For Bloch, a little bit of preparation and a less selective memory would have allowed entirely new decisions to have been made, potentially saving France from its current predicament.

In this testimonial section, one also finds praise for average men who have risen to the challenges presented by the War. Much like we will see later in this chapter with Jean-Paul Sartre's *Bariona* (1940), Bloch focuses much of his praise and hope for the country on the average soldier. While there are considerably fewer mentions of heroic soldiers than criticisms of General Staff officers, Bloch does take care to include a few noteworthy examples of soldiers and civilians alike who went above and beyond the call of duty. The work is scattered with observations like "Que nos soldats avaient donc alors de bonne volonté et de gentillesse!"<sup>670</sup> about his fellow soldiers. As to the few civilians mentioned, he frequently notes their bravery and willingness to help the soldiers, showing "beaucoup de courage."<sup>671</sup> As a mélange of soldier and citizen, Bloch seems to hold a special place for reservists, men who had, until recently, been at home with their families, working at their trades. He says that he saw many incidents in which reservists, like himself, demonstrated immense bravery, with "ressources d'autorité, de compétence et de dévouement"<sup>672</sup> frequently lacking in their superiors. The contrast between the common decency and bravery of these two groups with the condemnation of military leaders permeates the book, leaving no doubt whom Bloch blames for the current predicament.

Indeed, Bloch frequently stresses that when he criticizes the military, he is targeting specific people and a pervasive mentality that not all soldiers have adopted: "Je ne prétends nullement englober ici, dans une condamnation *a priori*, tout un groupe d'hommes parmi lesquels, qu'il s'agit d'active ou de réserve, il se rencontrait certainement beaucoup de

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 139.

travailleurs dévoués et compétents.”<sup>673</sup> Of course, the unfortunate truth for Bloch was that these hard-working, decent men rarely, if ever, were given positions of authority within a military designed to resist change.

The last section of the book is devoted to Bloch’s summation and plea for understanding. He begins “L’Examen de conscience d’un Français” with a reminder that while the military establishment must accept responsibility for the debacle of the defeat, the nation itself is responsible for creating and perpetuating the environment that allowed it to flourish. The General Staff was made up of men raised and educated in the French system: “les états-majors ont travaillé avec les instruments que le pays leur avait fournis. [...] Ils étaient eux-mêmes ce que les milieux humains dont ils tiraient leur origine les avaient faits et ce que l’ensemble de la communauté française leur avait permis d’être.”<sup>674</sup> In this way, Bloch refuses to allow the French nation to distance itself from what it created and condoned for so many years.

In a note added in 1942, Bloch notes that: “la crise de la moralité collective, dans certaines couches de la nation, et les réactions de ces mêmes éléments contre la crise, nous ne connaissons aujourd’hui tout cela que trop bien: la « collaboration » a été une sûre pierre de touche.”<sup>675</sup> In this later reflection, Bloch easily ties the earlier French “morality crisis” not only to a cause of the wartime defeat, but also to the country’s willingness to accept collaboration with the enemy. Part of the reason for this demoralization came from the realization that France was no longer regarded as a formidable world power by its allies. Bloch states that: “Notre prestige avait vécu et on [the Allies] ne nous le cacha guère. Était-ce la faute de nos Alliés?”<sup>676</sup> Although he was an extraordinarily patriotic Frenchman, Bloch was also a thoroughly trained

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., 138 fn.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., 106.

historian, who once again shows his understanding of France's current predicament vis-à-vis its glorious past. Frenchmen must now accept that their leaders not only lost the battle, but endangered the country's international reputation.

Bloch does single out the British as a particularly important ally in the War. Despite alarming levels of "Anglophobia" in France, he clearly tells his reader that France owes much to its historical nemesis. According to him, the specter of "la Pucelle" (Jeanne d'Arc) and the wars with Pitt were still present in the minds of many Frenchmen, causing them to reject any overtures of friendship from their new allies.<sup>677</sup> These long-ago incidents "n'ont tout à fait cessé de se profiler à l'arrière-plan d'une opinion collective douée de mémoire. Peut-être serait-ce un bienfait, pour un vieux peuple, de savoir plus facilement oublier: car le souvenir brouille parfois l'image du présent."<sup>678</sup> Mankind must frequently forget the past in order to adapt to the present, which Bloch felt the French were loath to do. Bloch acknowledges the dangers the British are willing to undertake for their allies, citing their "abnégation devant le danger" and their "cordiale sollicitude" in embarking French troops.<sup>679</sup> Despite their centuries-long antagonism, the British have been able to put aside their differences to come to the aid of a nation now considered an ally, something most Frenchmen would be unable to consider.

Of course, cooperation between the two countries during World War I should have mitigated greatly the distrust, but Bloch notes that Anglophobia was being encouraged by various groups, leading to "une misérable exploitation" of anti-British sentiment. One of the factors causing this contention between the Allies was the historic distrust between the two countries. The other reason was due to other sources that were "plus factices et beaucoup plus

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<sup>677</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid., 102.

impures.”<sup>680</sup> These sources were tied to military leaders and their anti-British message was spread via journals that continuously played up telling the troops in no uncertain terms that France’s “devoir nous appelle à la « destruction » de l’Angleterre.”<sup>681</sup> Once again, Bloch did not give a specific name for the weekly journal, but it would have been easily recognizable to his readers.

Bloch warns of the dangers of allowing the past to color current decisions: “Le proche passé est, pour l’homme moyen, un commode écran; il lui cache les lointains de l’histoire et leurs tragiques possibilités de renouvellement.”<sup>682</sup> France must no longer be allowed to delude itself into thinking that barbarism is a thing of the past, and that the country can choose which historical lessons it wishes to heed. The method and rapidity of modern warfare created new problems, but Frenchmen must be vigilant lest they begin to accept the present as a *fait accompli*, rather than carrying on the fight.

In the last section of the book, he shifts his focus from individual actors to the nation. In the beginning of the conflict, there was a general sense of enthusiasm and patriotism that pervaded the country: “*la Marseillaise* n’avait pas cessé de souffler, d’un même haleine, le culte de la patrie et l’exécration des tyrans.”<sup>683</sup> As defeat loomed, however, that sense of national pride and unity became less and less apparent. Taking the example of Alsace-Lorraine, he notes that the territory’s annexation came to be an accepted loss: “Quant à l’Alsace-Lorraine, s’il est vrai que l’images des provinces martyres surgit brusquement, dès les premiers combats d’août 1914, hors de l’ombre discrète où, quelques jours plus tôt, on la voyait encore enveloppée, ce fut

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid., 171.

seulement sous l'effet de nécessités déjà consenties.”<sup>684</sup> While Alsace-Lorraine had been of primary importance during the Franco-Prussian War, it faded to a secondary issue during the Nazi invasion. With the country forced to take up arms once again, peripheral concerns like Alsace-Lorraine quickly became casualties of war.

After addressing the problem of waning patriotism, Bloch next moves to labor issues as a cause of conflict within France. He condemns both labor unions and the petit bourgeois owners. Labor unions had become so powerful that even in wartime manufacturing plants, men were told to stick to the levels established by shop stewards, thus endangering supplies to the troops. The ownership likewise had become querulous, fearing that labor slow-downs would cost them money and power: “la poussée des nouvelles couches sociales menaçait la puissance, économique et politique, d'un groupe habitué à commander.”<sup>685</sup> The loss of economic power led directly to loss of political power, thus signaling one of the death knells of the Third Republic, a bourgeois stronghold.

In short order, Bloch goes on to denounce the national press for its failure to inform the public of the coming dangers. He felt that, with a bit of forewarning, the country may have been in a better position to prevent, or at least prepare for, the War: “pour prévoir l'orage et s'armer dûment, à l'avance, contre ses foudres, c'était là une médiocre préparation mentale.”<sup>686</sup> Of course, “mental preparation” is gained not only through journals, but also by reading and keeping oneself aware of the enemy. According to Bloch, reading was an infrequent activity among not only soldiers, but French society as a whole. He lamented the wasted opportunities to enrich the country, due in part to the lack of available resources: “La misère de nos bibliothèques

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid., 177.

municipales a été maintes fois dénoncée.”<sup>687</sup> For a serious scholar, there could have been no greater threat to French civilization than the lack of access to books, whether for pleasure or for better understanding historical trends.

Bloch believed that this “paresse de savoir” came from the “retour à la terre”<sup>688</sup> mentality that would be so heavily pushed by Vichy. The men who would go on to found the Vichy régime that pushed *travail, famille, patrie* seemed to Bloch to be turning France into nothing but a giant agricultural producer for the Nazis. Although the propaganda ostensibly came from a French government, it was clearly the result of a puppet government fulfilling its master’s wishes: “à travers le micro, la voix qui parle notre langue vient de là-bas.”<sup>689</sup> With its lack of information and preparation, France had left itself to the mercy of its invaders.

The breakdown of the education system is once again mentioned in the book’s summary, with a special emphasis placed on the failure of teaching history. Referring to the “intellectual laziness” prevalent in French society, Bloch traces its causes to higher education, which “fait beaucoup trop peu pour développer l’énergie intellectuelle.”<sup>690</sup> This lack of intellectual curiosity allowed political parties to develop that took advantage of people’s fears about current problems. The parties, favoring “l’intrigue, aux dépens de l’intelligence ou du dévouement,” created large divisions in an already divided country. Parties became mismatched groups who had little in common: “Prisonniers de dogmes qu’ils savaient périmés, de programmes qu’ils avaient renoncé à réaliser, les grands partis unissaient, fallacieusement, des hommes qui, sur les grands problèmes du moment – on le vit bien après Munich – s’étaient formé les opinions les plus

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid., 186.

opposées.”<sup>691</sup> In this tumultuous time, political parties served only as springboards for opportunists, who spent all their time removing each other from power, rather than working toward a solution.

#### 4.3.5 The Political Message of *L'Étrange défaite*

The lessons contained in *L'Étrange défaite* are clearly presented, with many anecdotes and historical facts to back them up. If not for an outdated and seriously flawed system of military education and training, Bloch believes that France could well have repulsed the German invasion.

Among the lessons Bloch intended people to take from his wartime observations was the danger of false belief. A clear demonstration of this danger can be found in Bloch's other famous posthumous text, *Apologie pour l'histoire*. In this work, he recounts an incident that took place during the First World War, in which French soldiers willingly misunderstand a German prisoner. By confusing the names of two villages (Braisne and Brême), the French infantry regiment instantly ascribes incredible foresight and craftiness to the enemy, for having stationed a spy in Braisne years before the War broke out.<sup>692</sup> Bloch refuses to allow that this is simply an error of hearing; rather, he sees it as unconscious interpretation on the part of the French soldiers who expected to hear tales of German cunning. This sort of comically uninformed participation by the masses is a common literary device. Bloch's anecdotes echoes the ladder and guillotine debacle described in Victor Hugo's *Quatrevingt-Treize*,<sup>693</sup> which can

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<sup>691</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>692</sup> Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* trans. Peter Putman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 88.

<sup>693</sup> See Chapter 3, p. 169-170.



itself be read as a parody of Terrorist politics. In both cases, average people are struggling to act upon their understanding of the war, but with terrible results.

To Bloch, this sort of otherwise harmless misunderstanding was symptomatic of the problems plaguing the country for the past generation. In 1921, he had written an article touching on exactly the same subject in World War I,<sup>694</sup> obviously recognizing this issue as an ongoing concern. In the above example, by blindly accepting that Germany was so crafty as to place spies decades before the War, the French abandoned any sense of hope that they could combat such overwhelming odds. They surrendered before the battle was truly joined. Bloch hammers home the idea that only by adjusting national attitudes can the country move forward. In this way, he is not terribly far removed from the Marquis de Sade, who urged his fellow Republicans for “encore un effort.” Both men were writing clandestinely to escape censorship and political retribution, while trying to appeal to the loyal Frenchmen they were trying to influence. Of course, Sade did expect his work to be published, while Bloch was in some doubt about his work making it to the public. The political and ideological goals of these two men were drastically opposed, with Sade emphasizing individual rights and privileges, and Bloch pleading in favor of a greater national community, one in which all its members take responsibility for the country’s defense.

*L’Étrange défaite*, appropriately for this study, ends with a reference to the Revolution, and its foundation built on virtue. Bloch relates an anecdote in which Adolf Hitler said to Hermann Rauschning, a German farmer who became heavily involved in Nazi politics in the early 1930s: “Nous avons raison de spéculer plutôt sur les vices que sur les vertus des hommes.

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<sup>694</sup> Marc Bloch, “Réflexions d’un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre,” *Revue de synthèse historique* XXXIII (1921).

La Révolution française en appelait à la vertu. Mieux vaudra que nous fassions le contraire.”<sup>695</sup>

Bloch crushingly responds to Hitler’s disdain with a purely chauvinistic retort: “On pardonnera à un Français, c’est-à-dire à un homme civilisé – car c’est tout un – s’il préfère à cet enseignement, celui de la Révolution, et de Montesquieu: « Dans un État populaire, il faut un ressort, qui est la vertu. »”<sup>696</sup> Ending on this note, Bloch observes that even if the task ahead is difficult, a free and noble people will always willingly run the risks to combat tyranny.

Although Marc Bloch was arrested and executed by the Gestapo before he could publish his last two works, *Apologie pour l’histoire ou Métier d’historien* and *L’Étrange défaite*, his loyal colleagues and students arranged to keep the works hidden and safe until they could be shared with the public. Already an established scholar by the early 1930s, Bloch continues to be an influential historian to this day. His wartime testimonial is written with clarity and passion, emerging from the Occupation as one of the most highly regarded texts of the period. The questions raised by his trial format and his witnessing of the nation’s trauma provide a significant opportunity for literary and historiographical scholars, as well as students of nationalism.

#### 4.4 SARTRE AND BLOCH

World War II’s *drôle de guerre*, or Phoney War, was a time of great surprise and confusion in France. A country that, through highly selective memory, had been accustomed to dominating European and world politics found itself defeated and occupied by a foreign power in a matter of

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<sup>695</sup> *L’Étrange défaite*, 207-208.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

months. In late 1940, the country struggled to understand how it had lost to what was assumed to be the same Germany of 1914. As Marc Bloch's *L'Étrange défaite* points out, this was not at all the case. He knew that France's inability to accept the sudden leap into modern warfare stemmed from systemic failures in national education and military training. The only hope for France to move past its recent mistakes was for its youth to "travailler dans la rage"<sup>697</sup> against the complacency of previous generations. Bloch does not seem to suffer from the lethargy associated with his generation, introducing himself to his new Resistance colleagues in 1942 as a new recruit, "le « poulain » de Maurice."<sup>698</sup>

Contrary to Bloch's tactic of understanding the causes of the problem and laying blame where it was due, Jean-Paul Sartre's approach was much more focused on actively moving the country toward the next steps it would need to take in order to regain its freedom. Sartre also focuses on the need for action, but he feels that it can be accomplished by his own generation for the future. His play urges the audience to claim its own destiny and to throw off the shackles of oppression. Although he was not encouraging the prisoners-of-war to escape their camp, he did tell them that they must live as free men, thus removing the power from their captors.

Although vastly different in tone and style, both works share some similar themes. The play and the historical testimony focus on the importance of the future. For Bloch, this meant examining the past and not allowing history to be used as an inflexible guide in modern decision-making. Sartre used an unsubtle allegory to teach his fellow prisoners-of-war that they must always have hope. Both authors focused on the next generation as the hope for the future, whether they were Bloch's soldiers who would be freed of École de guerre mentality, or Sartre's

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<sup>697</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., 275. Preface by Georges Altman.

children, who would profit from their parents' courageous sacrifices. However, Bloch was more aware of the weight of the past, both on the psychological and social level than Sartre.

The circumstances behind the writing of both pieces were also quite similar. Awaiting his decommission, Bloch compiled notes taken throughout the Phoney War into a complete text of observations and reflections. He was well aware that his work might never be published, but he felt it was important to provide his children and colleagues with his written testimony. Likewise, Sartre never expected his nativity play to be shown outside of his prisoner-of-war camp, but he was proud of the play at the time, since it accomplished his goal of raising morale and getting the men to think about how they could resist German occupation.

Whether an allegorical play or a straightforward testimonial, the works were set during wartime conflicts, with foreign aggressors menacing the homeland. In Bloch's case, everything is immediately contemporary, while Sartre, due primarily to censorship, had to cloak his message in a fictional biblical tale. Sartre used soldiers and priests to create, decorate, and act in his play, while Bloch told us stories of military men of all ranks. Both works strongly praise the efforts of average men struggling in the face of foreign occupation and a country that has seemingly accepted its fate.

In addition to the similarities in Bloch and Sartre, there are many differences between the two works. The most obvious distinction between the two is the choice of genre, partially due to the circumstances in which the works were composed. Sartre needed an allegorical play to deceive his censors, and to provide the men with an entertaining diversion, something the camp overseers were willing to allow. Bloch had a few months in which to organize his recent observations and anecdotes into a coherent statement about France's most recent defeat, although he did not have the distance typically considered necessary for historical scrutiny.

As a historian, Bloch believed strongly in the need to understand the past, as a learning tool, without committing oneself to repeating archaic choices. Sartre used historical examples sparsely, primarily as allegorical devices, preferring to focus on the current situation and to encourage men to immediate action. Both men wanted to make their downtrodden nation stronger and imbue a sense of hope in their colleagues. Once the military and political mistakes had been committed, there was no way to undo them; rather, France would need to find the strength to continue the fight. Just like the previous chapters' authors, these men sought to create new memories that would help define the nation from that point forward.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Literature is always created in specific circumstances, but it can continue to communicate its sense for generations to come. This study has presented texts written during moments of crisis for the French nation and has considered these works as literary *lieux de mémoire*. The relationship between collective memory, national history, and literature is a strong and long-standing tradition. It is particularly difficult to separate history and literature from national identity in French culture, given France's reliance on its *écrivains engagés* during crises. As I noted in my introduction, no choice made by an author is "value-neutral" and all of the authors in question made conscious decisions to use certain events as their settings.

The authors studied in this work attempted to give the nation cultural roots in the aftermath of extremely unsettling events. Particular attention was given to the nature of the relationship between literary texts and the disruptive abnormality of a historical event. The Revolution, the Franco-Prussian War, and World War II all heralded new political eras and changes in national identity. The Terror and the wars of the French Revolution emerge as the literary and historical beginning of a long entanglement between text and crisis in modern France. The anachronism present in many of the works studied points to the very ties that unite them. Literature written at times of crisis is inextricably tied to the events surrounding its creation. For example, in many ways, reactions to the French defeat in 1940 were conditioned by both the Revolution and the Franco-Prussian War.

For the nation's future, events that end the previous régime are paradoxically presented as openings, as moments of death and re-birth. In order for the nation to be "re-born," there must be an effort on the part of its citizens and, particularly for this study, its writers. This push for action is what we see explicitly in the Sadien concept of "encore un effort." Implicitly, though, all of the works in question serve as calls to action for the reader.

Within each of the periods studied in this dissertation, a specific moment stands out that defines it as an event. The Revolution, in many ways, came to its conclusion, and some would say fruition, in the Terror. After the defeat at Sedan, the Franco-Prussian War ended, giving birth to the Paris Commune. Finally, France's defeat after World War II's *drôle de guerre* signaled the Nazi invasion of France and the beginning of years of occupation. Each of these events represented the end of one régime and the debut of another. They forced the nation to reconsider how it would define itself from this point forward.

Using Alain Badiou's "fidelity to the event" theory, we have seen how literature reacted to these events. Writing, like other art forms, adapts to events and tries to make sense of the turmoil surrounding it, becoming an icon of the event. Literature is not just a working through of the event; it is a conscious attempt on the part of the author to participate in and shape interpretations of and reactions to the event. Narratives mediate between events, and also, between epochs. This mediation is particularly important in historical texts, which relate either contemporary or past actions to a future audience. In order to understand the authors' 'truths,' I have examined not only the works in question, but also contemporary representations of the events, including correspondence, fictional creations, and journals.

Reading historical texts allows us to move beyond basic fiction and into the realms of memory and culture. Texts reconstruct what no longer exists, as does history, but they do so in a

way continually open to interpretation. The same is true for all types of *lieux de mémoire*, which, according to Lawrence Kritzman, must have “a capacity for metamorphosis – for a recycling of knowledge that can proliferate cultural material in a discontinuous manner.”<sup>699</sup> The idea of metamorphosis is particularly à propos for this study, given the turmoil and chaos surrounding the creation of the works in question. Historical texts must be able to appeal to a diverse audience from multiple timeframes, while still conveying basic themes that resonate with their readers. Additionally, we have also seen how an imaginary moment of absolute beginning, namely the Terror, is later mobilized with contemporary political issues in mind. The authors in this study all sought, in their own ways, to ‘recycle’ some idea of the nation in order to push their own political agenda.

The Revolution was the most important event for defining the modern nation-state in France. Ernest Renan highlights the role of the Revolution in the nineteenth-century concept of French nationhood, writing: “France can claim the glory for having, through the French Revolution, proclaimed that a nation exists of itself. [...] It was we who founded the principle of nationality.”<sup>700</sup> This need to reassert France as the birthplace of modern national ideals is a recurrent theme in the literature studied, whether the Revolution is mentioned explicitly or its principles are used as an ideological background.

The vastly different texts chosen for this study all share common goals. Certain themes emerge throughout the discussion of the works in question. In addition to my stated themes of fear, power, and indoctrination, we also see symbolic destruction of a political régime, whether this means taking a completely new direction, as in the case of Sade, or a refusal of current

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<sup>699</sup> Lawrence D. Kritzman, “Identity Crises: France, Culture, and the Idea of the Nation,” *Substance* 24, no 1/2, issue 76/77: France’s Identity Crises (1995), 15.

<sup>700</sup> Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?,” trans. Martin Thom, *Nation and Narration*, Homi K. Bhabha, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 12.



trends and a return to a previous form of government, as Bruno would have it. All of the authors remind their audiences that the country is in danger, and must be rescued and supported by its citizens, in order to move forward and make France brilliant once more. Stability and security are also very prevalent themes in the works, frequently contrasted to the horrors of wartime conflict.

France becomes an emotional homeland, upon which authors build a base of memories to appeal to their readers. Within the texts in question, painful family memories are used to create bonds between fellow citizens, no matter how hateful the remembrance. A reciprocal bond is established between the *patrie* and its citizens, leading to a shared sense of familial, i.e. national, belonging. The weight of the past is cast off in order to create new memories, helping to solidify French national identity. In the case of Bloch, there is a strong tendency to analyze what has happened, while the other authors in question are more interested in instilling hope. No matter what their methodology, all of the authors used in this study wanted the nation to move forward to a better future.

As models of how literature responds to moments of crisis, the works chosen for this project both question and clarify the relationship between national identity and collective memory. Literature has been, and will continue to be, a register of political and historical turmoil. According to Micheline Tison-Braun, it serves as the consciousness of a society, expressing states of mind, while judging and analyzing them: “Like a seismograph, literature registers by amplification the shocks that perturb the social body [...], even those which by the nature of their subject matter seem to be insulated against the problems of the moment are no

less profoundly affected by them.”<sup>701</sup> A prime mirror of the nation’s struggles, literature impacts and reflects issues of national identity, for both contemporary audiences and those yet to come.

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<sup>701</sup> Micheline Tison-Braun, cited in Leo Weinstein, *The Subversive Tradition in French Literature, Vol. II: 1870-1971* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 162.

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